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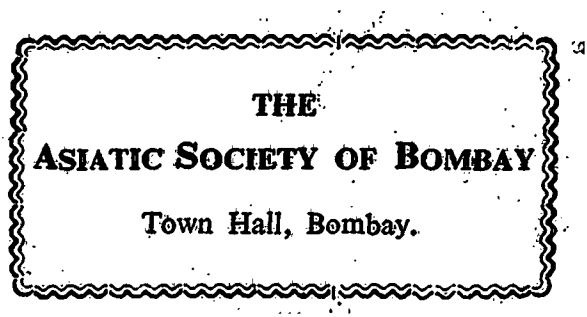

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THE

ENQUIRER.

REFLECTIONS

ON

EDUCATION, MANNERS,

AND

LITERATURE.

THE

ENQUIRER.

REFLECTIONS

ON

EDUCATION, MANNERS,

AND

LITERATURE.

IN A SERIES OF ESSAYS.

BY WILLIAM GODWIN.

——Ingenuas didiciſſe fideliter artes,
Emollit mores, nec ſinit eſſe feros. OVID.

LONDON:

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MDCCXCVII.

1797

be found conformable to truth. This is the method of inveſtigation attempted in the Enquiry concerning Political Juſtice.

An enquiry thus purſued is undoubtedly in the higheſt ſtyle of man. But it is liable to many diſadvantages; and, though there be nothing that it involves too high for our pride, it is perhaps a method of inveſtigation incommenſurate to our powers. A miſtake in the commencement is fatal. An error in almoſt any part of the proceſs is attended with extenſive injury; where every thing is connected, as it were, in an indiſſoluble chain, and an overſight in one ſtep vitiates all that are to follow. The intellectual eye of man, perhaps, is formed rather for the inſpection of minute and near, than of immenſe and diſtant objects. We proceed moſt ſafely, when we enter upon each portion of our proceſs, as it were, *de novo*; and there is danger, if we are too excluſively anxious about conſiſtency of ſyſtem, that we may forget the perpetual attention we owe to experience, the pole-ſtar of truth.

An inceſſant recurrence to experiment and actual obſervation, is the ſecond me-

thod

thod of inveſtigating truth, and the method adopted in the preſent volume. The author has attempted only a ſhort excurſion at a time; and then, diſmiſſing that, has ſet out afreſh upon a new purſuit. Each of the Eſſays he has written, is intended in a conſiderable degree to ſtand by itſelf. He has carried this principle ſo far, that he has not been ſeverely anxious relative to inconſiſtencies that may be diſcovered, between the ſpeculations of one Eſſay and the ſpeculations of another.

The Eſſays are principally the reſult of converſations, ſome of them held many years ago, though the Eſſays have all been compoſed for the preſent occaſion. The author has always had a paſſion for colloquial diſcuſſion; and, in the various opportunities that have been afforded him in different ſcenes of life, the reſult ſeemed frequently to be fruitful both of amuſement and inſtruction. There is a vivacity, and, if he may be permitted to ſay it, a richneſs, in the hints ſtruck out in converſation, that are with difficulty attained in any other method. In the ſubjects of ſeveral of the

moſt conſiderable Eſſays, the novelty of idea they may poſſibly contain, was regarded with a kind of complacence by the author, even when it was treated with ſupercilious inattention in its firſt communication. It is very poſſible, in theſe inſtances, that the public may eſpouſe the party of the original auditor, and not of the author. Wherever that ſhall be ſtrikingly the caſe, the complacence he mentions will be radically affected. An opinion peculiar to a ſingle individual, muſt be expected, to that individual to appear pregnant with diſſatisfaction and uncertainty.

From what has been ſaid the humble pretenſions of the contents of the preſent volume are ſufficiently obvious. They are preſented to the contemplative reader, not as *dicta*, but as the materials of thinking. They are committed to his mercy. In themſelves they are trivial; the hints of enquiry rather than actual enquiries: but hereafter perhaps they may be taken under other men's protection, and cheriſhed to maturity. The utmoſt that was here propoſed, was to give, if poſſible, a certain

perſpicuity and conſiſtency to each detached member of enquiry. Truth was the object principally regarded; and the author endeavoured to baniſh from his mind every modification of prepoſſeſſion and prejudice.

There is one thought more he is deſirous to communicate; and it may not improperly find a place in this Preface. It relates to the French Revolution; that inexhauſtible ſource of meditation to the reflecting and inquiſitive. While the principles of Gallic republicaniſm were yet in their infancy, the friends of innovation were ſomewhat too imperious in their tone. Their minds were in a ſtate of exaltation and ferment. They were too impatient and impetuous. There was ſomething in their ſternneſs that ſavoured of barbariſm. The barbariſm of our adverſaries was no adequate excuſe for this. The equable and independent mind ſhould not be diverted from its bias by the errors of the enemy with whom it may have to contend.

The author confeſſes that he did not eſcape the contagion. Thoſe who ranged themſelves

themſelves on the ſame party, have now moderated their intemperance, and he has accompanied them alſo in their preſent ſtage. With as ardent a paſſion for innovation as ever, he feels himſelf more patient and tranquil. He is deſirous of aſſiſting others, if poſſible, in perfecting the melioration of their temper. There are many things diſcuſſed in the following Eſſays, upon which perhaps, in the effervescence of his zeal, he would have diſdained to have written. But he is perſuaded that the cauſe of political reform, and the cauſe of intellectual and literary refinement, are inſeparably connected. He has alſo deſcended in his inveſtigations into the humbler walks of private life. He ardently deſires that thoſe who ſhall be active in promoting the cauſe of reform, may be found amiable in their perſonal manners, and even attached to the cultivation of miſcellaneous enquiries. He believes that this will afford the beſt ſecurity, for our preſerving kindneſs and univerſal philanthropy, in the midſt of the operations of our juſtice.

LONDON,
February 4, 1797.

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THE

THE

ENQUIRER.

PART I.

ESSAY I.

OF AWAKENING THE MIND.

THE true object of education, like that of every other moral proceſs, is the generation of happineſs.

Happineſs to the individual in the firſt place. If individuals were univerſally happy, the ſpecies would be happy.

Man is a ſocial being. In ſociety the intereſts of individuals are intertwiſted with each other, and cannot be ſeparated. Men ſhould be taught to aſſiſt each other. The firſt object ſhould be to train a man to be happy; the ſecond to train him to be uſeful, that is, to be virtuous.

There is a further reaſon for this. Virtue is eſſential to individual happineſs. There is no tranſport equal to that of the performance of virtue. All other happineſs, which is not connected with ſelf-approbation and ſympathy, is unſatisfactory and frigid.

To make a man virtuous we muſt make him wiſe. All virtue is a compromiſe between oppoſite motives and inducements. The man of genuine virtue, is a man of vigorous comprehenſion and long views. He who would be eminently uſeful, muſt be eminently inſtructed. He muſt be endowed with a ſagacious judgment and an ardent zeal.

The argument in favour of wiſdom or a cultivated intellect, like the argument in favour of virtue, when cloſely conſidered, ſhows itſelf to be twofold. Wiſdom is not only directly a means to virtue; it is alſo directly a means to happineſs. The man of enlightened underſtanding and perſevering ardour, has many ſources of enjoyment which the ignorant man cannot reach; and it may at leaſt be ſuſpected that theſe ſources are more exquiſite, more ſolid, more durable and more conſtantly acceſſible, than any which the wiſe man and the ignorant man poſſeſs in common.

Thus it appears that there are three leading objects

objects of a juſt education, happineſs, virtue, wiſdom, including under the term wiſdom both extent of information and energy of purſuit.

When a child is born, one of the earlieſt purpoſes of his inſtitutor ought to be, to awaken his mind, to breathe a ſoul into the, as yet, unformed maſs.

What may be the preciſe degree of difference with reſpect to capacity that children generally bring into the world with them, is a problem that it is perhaps impoſſible completely to ſolve.

But, if education cannot do every thing, it can do much. To the attainment of any accompliſhment what is principally neceſſary, is that the accompliſhment ſhould be ardently deſired. How many inſtances is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe there are, where this ardent deſire exiſts, and the means of attainment are clearly and ſkilfully pointed out, where yet the accompliſhment remains finally unattained? Give but ſufficient motive, and you have given every thing. Whether the object be to ſhoot at a mark, or to maſter a ſcience, this obſervation is equally applicable.

The means of exciting deſire are obvious. Has the propoſed object deſirable qualities? Exhibit them. Delineate them with perſpicuity, and delineate them with ardour. Show your

object from time to time under every point of view which is calculated to demonſtrate its lovelineſs. Criticiſe, commend, exemplify. Nothing is more common than for a maſter to fail in infuſing the paſſions into his pupil that he purpoſes to infuſe; but who is there that refuſes to confeſs, that the failure is to be aſcribed to the indolence or unſkilfulneſs of the maſter, not to the impoſſibility of ſucceſs?

The more inexperienced and immature is the mind of the infant, the greater is its pliability. It is not to be told how early, habits, pernicious or otherwiſe, are acquired. Children bring ſome qualities, favourable or adverſe to cultivation, into the world with them. But they ſpeedily acquire other qualities in addition to theſe, and which are probably of more moment than they. Thus a diſeaſed ſtate of body, and ſtill more an improper treatment, the rendering the child, in any conſiderable degree, either the tyrant or the ſlave of thoſe around him, may in the firſt twelve months implant ſeeds of an ill temper, which in ſome inſtances may accompany him through life.

Reaſoning from the principles already delivered, it would be a groſs miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the ſole object to be attended to in the firſt part of education, is to provide for the preſent

eaſe and happineſs of the individual. An awakened mind is one of the moſt important purpoſes of education, and it is a purpoſe that cannot too ſoon enter into the views of the preceptor.

It ſeems probable that early inſtruction is a thing, in itſelf conſidered, of very inferior value. Many of thoſe things which we learn in our youth, it is neceſſary, if we would well underſtand, that we ſhould learn over again in our riper years. Many things that, in the dark and unapprehenſive period of youth, are attained with infinite labour, may, by a ripe and judicious underſtanding, be acquired with an effort inexpreſſibly inferior. He who ſhould affirm, that the true object of juvenile education was to teach no one thing in particular, but to provide againſt the age of five and twenty a mind well regulated, active, and prepared to learn, would certainly not obtrude upon us the abſurdeſt of paradoxes.

The purpoſe therefore of early inſtruction is not abſolute. It is of leſs importance, generally ſpeaking, that a child ſhould acquire this or that ſpecies of knowledge, than that, through the medium of inſtruction, he ſhould acquire habits of intellectual activity. It is not ſo much for the direct conſideration of what he learns, that his mind muſt not be ſuffered to lie idle. The

preceptor in this reſpect is like the incloſer of uncultivated land; his firſt crops are not valued for their intrinſic excellence; they are ſown that the land may be brought into order. The ſprings of the mind, like the joints of the body, are apt to grow ſtiff for want of employment. They muſt be exerciſed in various directions and with unabating perſeverance. In a word, the firſt leſſon of a judicious education is, Learn to think, to diſcriminate, to remember and to enquire *.

* Conjectures reſpecting the ſtudies to be cultivated in youth, not ſo much for their own ſake, as for that of the habits they produce, are ſtated in Eſſay VI.

ESSAY

ESSAY II.

OF THE UTILITY OF TALENTS.

DOUBTS have ſometimes been ſuggeſted as to the deſirableneſs of talents. "Give to a child," it has frequently been ſaid, "good ſenſe and a virtuous propenſity; I deſire no more. Talents are often rather an injury than a benefit to their poſſeſſor. They are a ſort of *ignis fatuus* leading us aſtray; a fever of the mind incompatible with the ſober dictates of prudence. They tempt a man to the perpetration of bold, bad deeds; and qualify him rather to excite the admiration, than promote the intereſts of ſociety."

This may be affirmed to be a popular doctrine; yet where almoſt is the affectionate parent who would ſeriouſly ſay, "Take care that my child do not turn out a lad of too much capacity?"

The capacity which it is in the power of education to beſtow, muſt conſiſt principally in information. Is it to be feared that a man ſhould know too much for his happineſs? Knowledge for the moſt part conſiſts in added means of

pleaſure or enjoyment, and added diſcernment to ſelect thoſe means.

It muſt probably be partial, not extenſive, information, that is calculated to lead us aſtray. The twilight of knowledge bewilders, and infuſes a falſe confidence; its clear and perfect day muſt exhibit things in their true colours and dimenſions. The proper cure of miſtake, muſt be to afford me more information; not to take away that which I have.

Talents in general, notwithſtanding the exception mentioned in the outſet, hold a higher eſtimation among mankind, than virtues. There are few men who had not rather you ſhould ſay of them, that they are knaves, than that they are fools. But folly and wiſdom are to a great degree relative terms. He who paſſes for the oracle of an obſcure club, would perhaps appear ignorant and confuſed and vapid and tedious in a circle of men of genius. The only complete protection againſt the appellation of fool, is to be the poſſeſſor of uncommon capacity. A ſelf-ſatisfied, half-witted fellow, is the moſt ridiculous of all things.

The deciſion of common fame, in favour of talents in preference to virtues, is not ſo abſurd as has ſometimes been imagined. Talents are the inſtruments of uſefulneſs. He that has them,

is capable of producing uncommon benefit; he that has them not, is deſtitute even of the power. A tool with a fine edge may do miſchief; but a tool that neither has an edge nor can receive it, is merely lumber.

Again; the virtues of a weak and ignorant man ſcarcely deſerve the name. They poſſeſs it by way of courteſy only. I call ſuch a man good, ſomewhat in the ſame way as I would call my dog good. My dog ſeems attached to me; but change his condition, and he would be as much attached to the ſtupideſt dunce, or the moſt cankered villain. His attachment has no diſcrimination in it; it is merely the creature of habit.

Juſt ſo human virtues without diſcrimination, are no virtues. The weak man neither knows whom he ought to approve nor whom to diſapprove. Dazzled by the luſtre of uncommon excellence, he is frequently one of the firſt to defame it. He wiſhes me well. But he does not know how to benefit me. He does not know what benefit is. He does not underſtand the nature of happineſs or good. He cannot therefore be very zealous to promote it. He applies as much ardour to the thought of giving me a trinket, as to the thought of giving me liberty, magnanimity and independence.

The

The idea of withholding from me capacity, leſt I ſhould abuſe it, is juſt as rational, as it would be to ſhut me up in priſon, leſt by going at large I ſhould be led into miſchief.

I like better to be a man than a brute; and my preference is juſt. A man is capable of giving more and enjoying more. By parity of reaſon I had rather be a man with talent, than a man without. I ſhall be ſo much more a man, and leſs a brute. If it lie in my own choice, I ſhall undoubtedly ſay, Give me at leaſt the chance of doing uncommon good, and enjoying pleaſures uncommonly various and exquiſite.

The affairs of man in ſociety are not of ſo ſimple a texture, that they require only common talents to guide them. Tyranny grows up by a kind of neceſſity of nature; oppreſſion diſcovers itſelf; poverty, fraud, violence, murder, and a thouſand evils follow in the rear. Theſe cannot be extirpated without great diſcernment and great energies. Men of genius muſt riſe up, to ſhow their brethren that theſe evils, though familiar, are not therefore the leſs dreadful, to analyſe the machine of human ſociety, to demonſtrate how the parts are connected together, to explain the immenſe chain of events and conſequences, to point out the defects and the remedy. It is thus only that important reforms

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can be produced. Without talents, deſpotiſm would be endleſs, and public miſery inceſſant. Hence it follows, that he who is a friend to general happineſs, will neglect no chance of producing in his pupil or his child, one of the long-looked-for ſaviours of the human race.

ESSAY

ESSAY III.

OF THE SOURCES OF GENIUS.

IT is a queſtion which has but lately entered into philoſophical diſquiſition, whether genius be born with a man, or may be ſubſequently infuſed. Hitherto it was conſidered as a propoſition too obvious for controverſy, that it was born and could not be infuſed. This is however by no means obvious.

That ſome differences are born with children cannot reaſonably be denied. But to what do theſe differences amount? Look at a new-born infant. How unformed and plaſtic is his body; how ſimple the features of his mind!

The features of the mind depend upon perceptions, ſenſations, pleaſure and pain. But the perceptions, the pleaſures and pains of a child previous to his birth muſt make a very inſignificant catalogue. If his habits at a ſubſequent period can be changed and corrected by oppoſite impreſſions, it is not probable that the habits generated previous to birth can be inacceſſible to alteration.

If therefore there be any eſſential and deci-

ſive

ſive difference in children at the period of birth, it muſt conſiſt in the ſtructure of their bodies, not in the effects already produced upon their minds. The ſenſes or ſenſibility of one body may be radically more acute than thoſe of another. We do not find however that genius is inſeparably connected with any particular ſtructure of the organs of ſenſe. The man of genius is not unfrequently deficient in one or more of theſe organs; and a very ordinary man may be perfect in them all. Genius however may be connected with a certain ſtate of nervous ſenſibility originally exiſting in the frame. Yet the analogy from the external organs is rather unfavourable to this ſuppoſition. Diſſect a man of genius, and you cannot point out thoſe differences in his ſtructure which conſtitute him ſuch; ſtill leſs can you point out original and immutable differences. The whole therefore ſeems to be a gratuitous aſſumption.

Genius appears to ſignify little more in the firſt inſtance than a ſpirit of prying obſervation and inceſſant curioſity. But it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that theſe qualities are capable of being generated. Incidents of a certain ſort in early infancy will produce them; nay, may create them in a great degree even at a more advanced period.

period. If nothing occur to excite the mind, it will become torpid; if it be frequently and ſtrongly excited, unleſs in a manner that, while it excites, engenders averſion to effort, it will become active, mobile and turbulent. Hence it follows, that an adequate cauſe for the phenomenon of genius may be found, in the incidents that occur to us ſubſequent to birth. Genius, it ſhould ſeem, may be produced after this method; have we any ſufficient reaſon to doubt of its being always thus produced?

All the events of the phyſical and intellectual world happen in a train, take place in a certain order. The voluntary actions of men are as the motives which inſtigate them. Give me all the motives that have excited another man, and all the external advantages he has had to boaſt, and I ſhall arrive at an excellence not inferior to his.

This view of the nature of the human mind, is of the utmoſt importance in the ſcience of education. According to the notions formerly received, education was a lottery. The caſe would be parallel, if, when we went into battle in defence of our liberties and poſſeſſions, ninety-nine in a hundred of the enemy were muſket-proof.

It would be an inſtructive ſpeculation to enquire,

quire, under what circumſtances genius is generated, and whether, and under what circumſtances, it may be extinguiſhed.

It ſhould ſeem that the firſt indications of genius ordinarily diſcloſe themſelves at leaſt as early, as at the age of five years. As far therefore as genius is ſuſceptible of being produced by education, the production of it requires a very early care.

In infancy the mind is peculiarly ductile. We bring into the world with us nothing that deſerves the name of habit; are neither virtuous nor vicious, active nor idle, inattentive nor curious. The infant comes into our hands a ſubject, capable of certain impreſſions and of being led on to a certain degree of improvement. His mind is like his body. What at firſt was cartilage, gradually becomes bone. Juſt ſo the mind acquires its ſolidity; and what might originally have been bent in a thouſand directions, becomes ſtiff, unmanageable and unimpreſſible.

This change however takes place by degrees, and probably is never complete. The mind is probably never abſolutely incapable of any impreſſions and habits we might deſire to produce. The production grows more and more difficult, till the effecting it becomes a taſk too great for human

human ſtrength, and exceeds perhaps the powers and contrivance of the wiſeſt man that ever exiſted. Theſe remarks may contribute to explain the caſe of genius breaking out at a late period in an unpromiſing ſubject. If genius be nothing more in the firſt inſtance than a ſpirit of prying obſervation and inceſſant curioſity, there ſeems to be no impoſſibility, though there may be a greatly increaſed difficulty, in generating it after the period above aſſigned.

There ſeems to be a caſe, more frequent than that of poſt-dated genius, though not ſo much remarked; and not diſſimilar to it in its circumſtances. This is the caſe of genius, manifeſting itſelf, and afterwards becoming extinct. There is one appearance of this kind that has not eſcaped notice; the degradation of powers of mind ſometimes produced in a man for the remainder of his life, by ſevere indiſpoſition.

But the caſe is probably an affair of very uſual occurrence. Examine the children of peaſants. Nothing is more common than to find in them a promiſe of underſtanding, a quickneſs of obſervation, an ingenuouſneſs of character, and a delicacy of tact, at the age of ſeven years, the very traces of which are obliterated at the age of fourteen. The cares of the world fall upon them. They are enliſted at the crimping-houſe of

of oppreſſion. They are brutified by immoderate and unintermitted labour. Their hearts are hardened, and their ſpirits broken, by all that they ſee, all that they feel, and all that they look forward to. This is one of the moſt intereſting points of view in which we can conſider the preſent order of ſociety. It is the great ſlaughter-houſe of genius and of mind. It is the unrelenting murderer of hope and gaiety, of the love of reflection and the love of life.

Genius requires great care in the training, and the moſt favourable circumſtances to bring it to perfection. Why ſhould it not be ſuppoſed that, where circumſtances are eminently hoſtile, it will languiſh, ſicken, and die?

There is only one remark to be added here, to guard againſt miſapprehenſion. Genius, it ſeems to appear from the preceding ſpeculations, is not born with us, but generated ſubſequent to birth. It by no means follows from hence, that it is the produce of education, or ever was the work of the preceptor. Thouſands of impreſſions are made upon us, for one that is deſignedly produced. The child receives twenty ideas *per diem* perhaps from the preceptor; it is not impoſſible that he may have a million of perceptions in that period, with which the preceptor has no concern. We learn, it may be, a

routine of barren leſſons from our maſters; a circumſtance occurs perhaps, in the intercourſe of our companions, or in our commerce with nature, that makes its way directly to the heart, and becomes the fruitful parent of a thouſand projects and contemplations.

ESSAY

ESSAY IV.

OF THE SOURCES OF GENIUS.

TRUE philoſophy is probably the higheſt improvement and moſt deſirable condition of human underſtanding.

But there is an inſanity among philoſophers, that has brought philoſophy itſelf into diſcredit. There is nothing in which this inſanity more evidently diſplays itſelf, than in the rage of accounting for every thing.

> Nature well known, no prodigies remain,
> Comets are regular, and Wharton plain. POPE.

It may be granted that there is much of ſyſtem in the univerſe; or, in other words, it muſt be admitted that a careful obſerver of nature will be enabled by his experience in many caſes, from an acquaintance with the antecedent, to foretel the conſequent.

If one billiard-ball ſtrike another in a particular manner, we have great reaſon to ſuppoſe that the reſult will be ſimilar to what we have already obſerved in like inſtances. If fire be applied to gunpowder, we have great reaſon to expect an

exploſion. If the gunpowder be compreſſed in a tube, and a ball of lead be placed over it nearer the mouth of the tube, we have great reaſon to ſuppoſe that the exploſion will expel the ball, and cauſe it to move in the air in a certain curve. If the event does not follow in the manner we expected, we have great reaſon to ſuppoſe that, upon further examination, we ſhall find a difference in the antecedents correſpondent to the difference in the conſequents.

This uniformity of events and power of prediction conſtitute the entire baſis of human knowledge.

But there is a regularity and ſyſtem in the ſpeculations of philoſophers, exceeding any that is to be found in the operations of nature. We are too confident in our own ſkill, and imagine our ſcience to be greater than it is.

We perceive the ſucceſſion of events, but we are never acquainted with any ſecret virtue, by means of which two events are bound to each other.

If any man were to tell me that, if I pull the trigger of my gun, a ſwift and beautiful horſe will immediately appear ſtarting from the mouth of the tube; I can only anſwer that I do not expect it, and that it is contrary to the tenor of my former experience. But I can aſſign no reaſon, why this is an event intrinſically more abſurd,

abſurd, or leſs likely, than the event I have been accuſtomed to witneſs.

This is well known to thoſe who are acquainted with the lateſt ſpeculations and diſcoveries of philoſophers. It may be familiarly illuſtrated to the unlearned reader by remarking, that the proceſs of generation, in conſequence of which men and horſes are born, has obviouſly no more perceivable correſpondence with that event, than it would have, for me to pull the trigger of a gun.

It was probably this falſe confidence and preſumption among philoſophers, that led them indiſcriminately to reject the doctrine of inſtinct among the animal tribes. There is a uniformity in ſome of the ſpontaneous actions of animals, and a promptitude in others, which nothing that has yet been obſerved in the preceding circumſtances would have taught us to expect. It is this propoſition, that the term inſtinct, accurately conſidered, is calculated to expreſs. Inſtinct is a general name for that ſpecies of actions in the animal world, that does not fall under any ſeries of intellectual proceſſes with which we are acquainted.

Innumerable events are in like manner daily taking place in the univerſe, that do not fall under any of thoſe rules of ſucceſſion that human ſcience has yet delineated.

The world, inſtead of being, as the vanity of ſome men has taught them to aſſert, a labyrinth of which they hold the clue, is in reality full of enigmas which no penetration of man has hitherto been able to ſolve.

The principle above mentioned, which affirms that we are never acquainted with any ſecret virtue by means of which two events are bound to each other, is calculated to impreſs upon us a becoming humility in this reſpect.

It teaches us that we ought not to be ſurpriſed, when we ſee one event regularly ſucceeding another, where we ſuſpected leaſt of what is apprehended by the vulgar as a link of connection between them. If our eyes were open, and our prejudices diſmiſſed, we ſhould perpetually advert to an experience of this ſort.

That the accidents of body and mind ſhould regularly deſcend from father to ſon, is a thing that daily occurs, yet is little in correſpondence with the ſyſtems of our philoſophers.

How ſmall a ſhare, accurately ſpeaking, has the father in the production of the ſon? How many particles is it poſſible ſhould proceed from him, and conſtitute a part of the body of the child deſcended from him? Yet how many circumſtances they poſſeſs in common?

It has ſometimes been ſuppoſed that the reſemblance is produced by the intercourſe which takes

takes place between them after their birth. But this is an opinion which the facts by no means authoriſe us to entertain.

The firſt thing which may be mentioned as deſcending from father to ſon is his complexion; fair, if a European; ſwarthy or black, if a negro. Next, the ſon frequently inherits a ſtrong reſemblance to his father's diſtinguiſhing features. He inherits diſeaſes. He often reſembles him in ſtature. Perſons of the ſame family are frequently found to live to about the ſame age. Laſtly, there is often a ſtriking ſimilarity in their temper and diſpoſition.

It is eaſy to perceive how theſe obſervations will apply to the queſtion of genius. If ſo many other things be heritable, why may not talents be ſo alſo? They have a connection with many of the particulars above enumerated; and eſpecially there is a very intimate relation between a man's diſpoſition and his portion of underſtanding. Again; whatever is heritable, a man muſt bring into the world with him, either actually, or in the ſeminal germ from which it is afterwards to be unfolded. Putting therefore the notion of inheritance out of the queſtion, it ſhould ſeem that complexion, features, diſeaſes, ſtature, age and temper, may be, and frequently are, born with a man. Why may not then his talents in the ſame ſenſe be born with him?

Is this argument deciſive againſt the generability of talents in the human ſubject, after the period of birth?

It is the madneſs of philoſophy only, that would undertake to account for every thing, and to trace out the proceſs by which every event in the world is generated. But let us beware of falling into the oppoſite extreme. It will often happen that events, which at firſt ſight appear leaſt to aſſociate with that regularity and that preciſe ſyſtem to which we are accuſtomed, will be found upon a minuter and more patient inſpection really to belong to it. It is the madneſs of philoſophy to circumſcribe the univerſe within the bounds of our narrow ſyſtem; it is the madneſs of ignorance to ſuppoſe that every thing is new, and of a ſpecies totally diſſimilar from what we have already obſerved.

That a man brings a certain character into the world with him, is a point that muſt readily be conceded. The miſtake is to ſuppoſe that he brings an immutable character.

Genius is wiſdom; the poſſeſſing a great ſtore of ideas, together with a facility in calling them up, and a peculiar diſcernment in their ſelection or rejection. In what ſenſe can a new-born child be eſteemed wiſe?

He may have a certain prediſpoſition for wiſdom. But it can ſcarcely be doubted that

every child, not peculiarly defective in his make, is ſuſceptible of the communication of wiſdom, and conſequently, if the above definition be juſt, of genius.

The character of man is inceſſantly changing.

One of the principal reaſons why we are ſo apt to impute the intellectual differences of men to ſome cauſe operating prior to their birth, is that we are ſo little acquainted with the hiſtory of the early years of men of talents. Slight circumſtances at firſt determined their propenſities to this or that purſuit. Theſe circumſtances are irrecoverably forgotten, and we reaſon upon a ſuppoſition as if they never exiſted.

When the early life of a man of talents can be accurately traced, theſe circumſtances generally preſent themſelves to our obſervation.

The private memoirs of Gibbon the hiſtorian have juſt been publiſhed. In them we are able to trace with conſiderable accuracy the progreſs of his mind. While he was at college, he became reconciled to the Roman Catholic faith. By this circumſtance he incurred his father's diſpleaſure, who baniſhed him to an obſcure ſituation in Switzerland, where he was obliged to live upon a ſcanty proviſion, and was far removed from all the cuſtomary amuſements

of

of men of birth and fortune. If this train of circumſtances had not taken place, would he ever have been the hiſtorian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire? Yet how unuſual were his attainments in conſequence of theſe events, in learning, in acuteneſs of reſearch, and intuition of genius!

Circumſtances decide the purſuits in which we ſhall engage. Theſe purſuits again generate the talents that diſcover themſelves in our progreſs.

We are accuſtomed to ſuppoſe ſomething myſterious and ſupernatural in the caſe of men of genius.

But, if we will diſmiſs the firſt aſtoniſhment of ignorance, and deſcend to the patience of inveſtigation, we ſhall probably find that it falls within the ordinary and eſtabliſhed courſe of human events.

If a man produce a work of uncommon talents, it is immediately ſuppoſed that he has been through life an extraordinary creature, that the ſtamp of divinity was upon him, that a circle of glory, inviſible to profaner eyes, ſurrounded his head, and that every accent he breathed contained an indication of his elevated deſtiny.

It is no ſuch thing.

When

When a man writes a book of methodical inveſtigation, he does not write becauſe he underſtands the ſubject, but he underſtands the ſubject becauſe he has written. He was an uninſtructed tyro, expoſed to a thouſand fooliſh and miſerable miſtakes, when he began his work, compared with the degree of proficiency to which he has attained, when he has finiſhed it.

He who is now an eminent philoſopher or a ſublime poet, was formerly neither the one nor the other. Many a man has been overtaken by a premature death, and left nothing behind him but compoſitions worthy of ridicule and contempt, who, if he had lived, would perhaps have riſen to the higheſt literary eminence. If we could examine the ſchool-exerciſes of men who have afterwards done honour to mankind, we ſhould often find them inferior to thoſe of their ordinary competitors. If we could dive into the port-folios of their early youth, we ſhould meet with abundant matter for laughter at their ſenſeleſs incongruities, and for contemptuous aſtoniſhment.

There is no "divinity that hedges*" the man of genius. There is no guardian ſpirit that accompanies him through life. If you tell me that you are one of thoſe who are qualified to inſtruct

* Shakeſpear.

and

and guide mankind, it may be that I admit it; but I may reaſonably aſk, When did you become ſo, and how long has this been your character?

There is no man knows better than the man of talents, that he was a fool: for there is no man that finds in the records of his memory ſuch aſtoniſhing diſparities to contraſt with each other. He can recollect up to what period he was jejune, and up to what period he was dull. He can call to mind the innumerable errors of ſpeculation he has committed, that would almoſt diſgrace an idiot. His life divides itſelf in his conception into diſtinct periods, and he has ſaid to himſelf ten times in its courſe, From ſuch a time I began to live; the maſs of what went before, was too poor to be recollected with complacence. In reality each of theſe ſtages was an improvement upon that which went before; and it is perhaps only at the laſt of them that he became, what the ignorant vulgar ſuppoſed he was from the moment of his birth.

ESSAY

ESSAY V.

OF AN EARLY TASTE FOR READING.

THE firſt indications of genius diſcloſe themſelves at a very early period. A ſagacious obſerver of the varieties of intellect, will frequently be able to pronounce with ſome confidence upon a child of tender years, that he exhibits marks of future eminence in eloquence, invention or judgment.

The embryon ſeed that contains in it the promiſe of talent, if not born with a man, ordinarily takes its ſtation in him at no great diſtance from the period of birth. The mind is then, but rarely afterwards, in a ſtate to receive and to foſter it.

The talents of the mind, like the herbs of the ground, ſeem to diſtribute themſelves at random. The winds diſperſe from one ſpot to another the inviſible germs; they take root in many caſes without a planter; and grow up without care or obſervation.

It would be truly worthy of regret, if chance, ſo

ſo to ſpeak, could do that, which all the ſagacity of man was unable to effect*; if the diſtribution of the nobleſt ornament of our nature, could be ſubjected to no rules, and reduced to no ſyſtem.

He that would extend in this reſpect the province of education, muſt proceed, like the improvers of other ſciences, by experiment and obſervation. He muſt watch the progreſs of the dawning mind, and diſcover what it is that gives it its firſt determination.

The ſower of ſeed cannot foretel which ſeed ſhall fall uſeleſs to the ground, deſtined to wither and to periſh, and which ſhall take root, and diſplay the moſt exuberant fertility. As among the ſeeds of the earth, ſo among the perceptions of the human mind, ſome are reſerved, as it were, for inſtant and entire oblivion, and ſome, undying and immortal, aſſume an importance never to be ſuperſeded. For the firſt we ought not to torment ourſelves with an irrational anxiety; the laſt cannot obtain from us an attention ſuperior to their worth.

* This ſuggeſtion is by no means inconſiſtent with the remark in Eſſay III. that the production of genius perhaps never was the work of the preceptor. What never yet has been accompliſhed, may hereafter be accompliſhed.

There

There is perhaps nothing that has a greater tendency to decide favourably or unfavourably reſpecting a man's future intellect, than the queſtion whether or not he be impreſſed with an early taſte for reading.

Books are the depoſitary of every thing that is moſt honourable to man. Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms. He that loves reading, has every thing within his reach. He has but to deſire; and he may poſſeſs himſelf of every ſpecies of wiſdom to judge, and power to perform.

The chief point of difference between the man of talent and the man without, conſiſts in the different ways in which their minds are employed during the ſame interval. They are obliged, let us ſuppoſe, to walk from Temple-Bar to Hyde-Park-Corner. The dull man goes ſtraight forward; he has ſo many furlongs to traverſe. He obſerves if he meets any of his acquaintance; he enquires reſpecting their health and their family. He glances perhaps the ſhops as he paſſes; he admires the faſhion of a buckle, and the metal of a tea-urn. If he experience any flights of fancy, they are of a ſhort extent; of the ſame nature as the flights of a foreſt-bird, clipped of his wings,

and

and condemned to paſs the reſt of his life in a farm-yard. On the other hand the man of talent gives full ſcope to his imagination. He laughs and cries. Unindebted to the ſuggeſtions of ſurrounding objects, his whole ſoul is employed. He enters into nice calculations; he digeſts ſagacious reaſonings. In imagination he declaims or deſcribes, impreſſed with the deepeſt ſympathy, or elevated to the loftieſt rapture. He makes a thouſand new and admirable combinations. He paſſes through a thouſand imaginary ſcenes, tries his courage, taſks his ingenuity, and thus becomes gradually prepared to meet almoſt any of the many-coloured events of human life. He conſults by the aid of memory the books he has read, and projects others for the future inſtruction and delight of mankind. If he obſerve the paſſengers, he reads their countenances, conjectures their paſt hiſtory, and forms a ſuperficial notion of their wiſdom or folly, their virtue or vice, their ſatisfaction or miſery. If he obſerve the ſcenes that occur, it is with the eye of a connoiſſeur or an artiſt. Every object is capable of ſuggeſting to him a volume of reflections. The time of theſe two perſons in one reſpect reſembles; it has brought them both to Hyde-Park-Corner. In almoſt every other reſpect it is diſſimilar.

What

What is it that tends to generate theſe very oppoſite habits of mind?

Probably nothing has contributed more than an early taſte for reading. Books gratify and excite our curioſity in innumerable ways. They force us to reflect. They hurry us from point to point. They preſent direct ideas of various kinds, and they ſuggeſt indirect ones. In a well-written book we are preſented with the matureſt reflections, or the happieſt flights, of a mind of uncommon excellence. It is impoſſible that we can be much accuſtomed to ſuch companions, without attaining ſome reſemblance of them. When I read Thomſon, I become Thomſon; when I read Milton, I become Milton. I find myſelf a ſort of intellectual camelion, aſſuming the colour of the ſubſtances on which I reſt. He that revels in a well-choſen library, has innumerable diſhes, and all of admirable flavour. His taſte is rendered ſo acute, as eaſily to diſtinguiſh the niceſt ſhades of difference. His mind becomes ductile, ſuſceptible to every impreſſion, and gaining new refinement from them all. His varieties of thinking baffle calculation, and his powers, whether of reaſon or fancy, become eminently vigorous.

Much ſeems to depend in this caſe upon the period at which the taſte for reading has com-

menced. If it be late, the mind ſeems frequently to have acquired a previous obſtinacy and untractableneſs. The late reader makes a ſuperficial acquaintance with his author, but is never admitted into the familiarity of a friend. Stiffneſs and formality are always viſible between them. He does not become the creature of his author; neither bends with all his caprices, nor ſympathiſes with all his ſenſations. This mode of reading, upon which we depend for the conſummation of our improvement, can ſcarcely be acquired, unleſs we begin to read with pleaſure at a period too early for memory to record, liſp the numbers of the poet, and in our unpractiſed imagination adhere to the letter of the moraliſing allegoriſt. In that caſe we ſhall ſoon be induced ourſelves to "build" the unpoliſhed "rhyme *," and ſhall act over in fond imitation the ſcenes we have reviewed.

An early taſte for reading, though a moſt promiſing indication, muſt not be excluſively depended on. It muſt be aided by favourable circumſtances, or the early reader may degenerate into an unproductive pedant, or a literary idler. It ſeemed to appear in a preceding eſſay, that genius, when ripened to the birth, may yet be extinguiſhed. Much more may the ma-

* Milton.

terials

terials of genius ſuffer an untimely blight and terminate in an abortion. But what is moſt to be feared, is that ſome adverſe gale ſhould hurry the adventurer a thouſand miles athwart into the chaos of laborious ſlavery, removing him from the genial influence of a tranquil leiſure, or tranſporting him to a dreary climate where the half-formed bloſſoms of hope ſhall be irremediably deſtroyed *. That the mind may expatiate in its true element, it is neceſſary that it ſhould become neither the victim of labour, nor the ſlave of terror, diſcouragement and diſguſt. This is the true danger; as to pedantry, it may be queſtioned whether it is the offspring of early reading, or not rather of a taſte for reading taken up at a late and inauſpicious period.

* The canker galls the infants of the ſpring,
Too oft before their buttons be diſclos'd;
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blaſtments are moſt imminent.

SHAKESPEAR.

ESSAY VI.

OF THE STUDY OF THE CLASSICS.

A QUESTION which has of late given riſe to conſiderable diſcuſſion, is, whether the ſtudy of the claſſics ought to form a part of the education of youth? In the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth centuries the very propoſal of ſuch a queſtion would have been regarded as a ſort of blaſphemy; claſſical learning was regarded as the firſt of all literary accompliſhments. But in the preſent day inquiſitive and active ſpirits are little inclined to take any thing upon truſt; preſcription is not admitted as giving any ſanction in matters of opinion; no practice, that is not faſtened upon us by decrees and penalties, can hope to maintain its full meaſure of influence in civil ſociety, except ſo far as it can be ſupported by irrefragable arguments.

An obvious ground of preſumption in favour of claſſical learning will ſuggeſt itſelf in tracing its hiſtory. The ſtudy of the Latin and Greek authors will ſcarcely be thought to deſerve this appellation, ſo long as their language was the vernacular

vernacular tongue of thoſe who ſtudied them. Claſſical learning then may be ſaid to have taken its riſe in the fifteenth century, at which time the human mind awoke from a ſlumber that threatened to be little leſs than eternal. The principal cauſe of this auſpicious event was the ſtudy of the claſſics. Suddenly men were ſeized with the deſire of retcuing them from the oblivion into which they had fallen. It ſeemed as if this deſire had ariſen juſt in time to render its gratification not impracticable. Some of the moſt valuable remains of antiquity now in our poſſeſſion, were upon the point of being utterly loſt. Kings and princes conſidered their recovery as the moſt important taſk in which they could be engaged; ſcholars travelled without intermiſſion, drawn from country to country by the fainteſt hope of encountering a claſſical manuſcript; and the ſucceſs of their ſearch afforded a more guiltleſs, but not a leſs envied triumph, than the defeat of armies and the plunder of millions. The moſt honoured taſk of the literati of that day, was the illuſtration of an ancient author; commentator roſe upon commentator; obſcurities were removed; preciſion acquired; the Greek and Roman writers were underſtood and reliſhed in a degree ſcarcely inferior to their contemporaries; nor were they only peruſed

with avidity, their purity and their beauties were almoſt rivalled at the diſtance of almoſt fifteen hundred years.

Such is the hiſtory of one of the moſt intereſting æras in the annals of mankind. We are indebted to the zeal, perhaps a little extravagant and enthuſiaſtic, of the revivers of letters, for more than we can expreſs. If there be in the preſent age any wiſdom, any powers of reaſoning, any acquaintance with the ſecrets of nature, any refinement of language, any elegance of compoſition, any love of all that can adorn and benefit the human race, this is the ſource from which they ultimately flowed *. From the Greek and Roman authors the moderns learned to think. While they inveſtigated with unconquerable perſeverance the ideas and ſentiments of antiquity, the feculence of their own underſtandings ſubſided. The ſhackles of ſuperſtition were looſened. Men were no longer ſhut up in ſo narrow boundaries; nor benumbed in their faculties by the ſound of one eternal monotony. They ſaw; they examined; they compared: Intellect aſſumed new courage, ſhook its daring wing, and eſſayed a bolder flight. Patience of

* I do not infer that they could have flowed from no other ſource; I relate a fact.

inveſtigation

inveſtigation was acquired. The love of truth diſplayed itſelf, and the love of liberty.

Shall we then diſcard that, to which our anceſtors owed every thing they poſſeſſed? Do we not fear leſt, by removing the foundations of intellect, we ſhould ſacrifice intellect itſelf? Do we not fear leſt, by imperceptible degrees, we ſhould bring back the dark ages, and once again plunge our ſpecies in eternal night?

This however, though a plauſible, is not a ſtrict and logical argument in favour of claſſical learning; and, if unſupported by direct reaſoning, ought not probably to be conſidered as deciding the controverſy. The ſtrongeſt direct arguments are probably as follow. They will be found to apply with the moſt force to the ſtudy of Latin.

The Latin authors are poſſeſſed of uncommon excellence. One kind of excellence they poſſeſs, which is not to be found in an equal degree in the writers of any other country: an exquiſite ſkill in the uſe of language; a happy ſelection of words; a beautiful ſtructure of phraſe; a tranſparency of ſtyle; a preciſion by which they communicate the ſtrongeſt ſentiments in the directeſt form; in a word, every thing that relates to the moſt admirable poliſh of manner. Other writers have taken more licentious flights, and pro-

duced greater aſtoniſhment in their readers. Other writers have ventured more fearleſsly into unexplored regions, and cropped thoſe beauties which hang over the brink of the precipice of deformity. But it is the appropriate praiſe of the beſt Roman authors, that they ſcarcely preſent us with one idle and excreſcent clauſe, that they continually convey their meaning in the choiceſt words. Their lines dwell upon our memory; their ſentences have the force of maxims, every part vigorous, and ſeldom any thing that can be changed but for the worſe. We wander in a ſcene where every thing is luxuriant, yet every thing vivid, graceful and correct.

It is commonly ſaid, that you may read the works of foreign authors in tranſlations. But the excellencies above enumerated are incapable of being transfuſed. A diffuſe and voluminous author, whoſe merit conſiſts chiefly in his thoughts, and little in the manner of attiring them, may be tranſlated. But who can tranſlate Horace? who endure to read the tranſlation? Who is there, acquainted with him only through this medium, but liſtens with aſtoniſhment and incredulity to the encomiums he has received from the hour his poems were produced?

The Roman hiſtorians are the beſt that ever exiſted,

exiſted. The dramatic merit and the eloquence of Livy; the profound philoſophy of Salluſt; the rich and ſolemn pencil of Tacitus, all ages of the world will admire; but no hiſtorian of any other country has ever been able to rival.

Add to this, that the beſt ages of Rome afford the pureſt models of virtue that are any where to be met with. Mankind are too apt to loſe ſight of all that is heroic, magnanimous and public-ſpirited. Modern ages have formed to themſelves a virtue, rather poliſhed, than ſublime, that conſiſts in petty courteſies, rather than in the tranquil grandeur of an elevated mind. It is by turning to Fabricius, and men like Fabricius, that we are brought to recollect what human nature is. Left to ourſelves, we are apt to ſink into effeminacy and apathy.

But, if ſuch are the men with whoſe actions it is moſt our intereſt to familiariſe ourſelves, we cannot do this ſo ſucceſsfully as by ſtudying them in the works of their countrymen. To know them truly, we muſt not content ourſelves with viewing them from a diſtance, and reading them in abridgment. We muſt watch their minuteſt actions, we muſt dwell upon their every word. We muſt gain admiſſion among their confidents, and penetrate into their ſecret ſouls. Nothing

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is ſo wretched a waſte of time as the ſtudy of abridgments.

If it be allowable to elucidate the inſufficiency of the modern writers of ancient hiſtory by inſtances, it might be remarked, that Rollin takes care repeatedly to remind his reader that the virtues of the heathens were only ſo many ſpecious vices, and interlards his hiſtory with an expoſition of the prophecies of Daniel; that Hooke calumniates all the greateſt characters of Rome to exalt the reputation of Cæſar; and that Mitford and Gillies are at all times ready to ſuſpend their narrative for a panegyric upon modern deſpotiſm. No perſons ſeem to have been more utter ſtrangers to that republican ſpirit which is the ſource of our nobleſt virtues, than thoſe authors who have aſſumed to be the hiſtoriographers of the ancient republics.

A ſecond argument in favour of the ſtudy of the Latin claſſics may be thus ſtated. Language is the great medium of communication among mankind. He that deſires to inſtruct others, or to gain perſonal reputation, muſt be able to expreſs himſelf with perſpicuity and propriety. Moſt of the miſunderſtandings which have exiſted, in ſentiment or in ſcience, may be traced to ſome obſcurity or looſeneſs of expreſſion as their

their ſource. Add to this, that the taſte of mankind is ſo far refined, that they will not accept an uncouth and diſguſtful leſſon, but require elegance and ornament. One of the arts that tend moſt to the improvement of human intellect, is the art of language; and he is no true friend to his ſpecies, who would ſuffer them from neglect to fall back, from their preſent ſtate of advancement in this reſpect, into a barbarous and undiſciplined jargon.

But it is perhaps impoſſible to underſtand one language, unleſs we are acquainted with more than one. It is by compariſon only that we can enter into the philoſophy of language. It is by compariſon only that we ſeparate ideas, and the words by which thoſe ideas are ordinarily conveyed. It is by collating one language with another, that we detect all the ſhades of meaning through the various inflections of words, and all the minuter degradations of ſenſe which the ſame word ſuffers, as it ſhall happen to be connected with different topics. He that is acquainted with only one language, will probably always remain in ſome degree the ſlave of language. From the imperfectneſs of his knowledge, he will feel himſelf at one time ſeduced to ſay the thing he did not mean, and at another time will fall into errors of this ſort without being

being aware of it. It is impoſſible he ſhould underſtand the full force of words. He will ſometimes produce ridicule, where he intended to produce paſſion. He will ſearch in vain for the hidden treaſures of his native tongue. He will never be able to employ it in the moſt advantageous manner. He cannot be well acquainted with its ſtrength and its weakneſs. He is uninformed reſpecting its true genius and diſcriminating characteriſtics. But the man who is competent to and exerciſed in the compariſon of languages, has attained to his proper elevation. Language is not his maſter, but he is the maſter of language. Things hold their juſt order in his mind, ideas firſt, and then words. Words therefore are uſed by him as the means of communicating or giving permanence to his ſentiments; and the whole magazine of his native tongue is ſubjected at his feet.

The ſcience of etymology has been earneſtly recommended, as the only adequate inſtrument for effecting the purpoſe here deſcribed; and undoubtedly it is of high importance for the purpoſe of enabling us more accurately to judge of the value of the words we have occaſion to employ. But the neceſſity and the uſe of etymology have perhaps been exaggerated. However extenſive are our reſearches, we muſt ſtop

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ſomewhere; and he that has traced a word half-way to its ſource, is ſubject to a portion of the ſame imperfection, as he that knows nothing of it beyond the language in which he has occaſion to uſe it. It is here perhaps as in many other intellectual acquiſitions; the habit of inveſtigating, diſtinguiſhing and ſubtiliſing, is of more importance than any individual portions of knowledge we may chance to have accumulated. Add to which, that the immediate concern of the ſpeaker or writer, is not with the meaning his words bore at ſome diſtant period or the materials of which they are compounded, but with the meaning that properly belongs to them according to the pureſt ſtandard of the language he uſes. Words are perpetually fluctuating in this reſpect. The gradations by which they change their ſenſe are ordinarily imperceptible; but from age to age their variations are often the moſt memorable and ſurpriſing. The true mode therefore of becoming acquainted with their exact force, is to liſten to them in the beſt ſpeakers, and conſider them as they occur in the beſt writers, that have yet appeared.

Latin is indeed a language that will furniſh us with the etymology of many of our own words; but it has perhaps peculiar recommendations as a praxis in the habits of inveſtigation

gation and analyſis. Its words undergo an uncommon number of variations and inflections. Thoſe inflections are more philoſophically appropriated, and more diſtinct in their meaning, than the inflections of any language of a more ancient date. As the words in Latin compoſition are not arranged in a philoſophical or natural order, the mind is obliged to exert itſelf to diſentangle the chaos, and is compelled to yield an unintermitted attention to the inflections. It is therefore probable that the philoſophy of language is beſt acquired by ſtudying this language. Practice is ſuperior to theory; and this ſcience will perhaps be more ſucceſsfully learned, *and more deeply imprinted*, by the peruſal of *Virgil and Horace*, than by reading a thouſand *treatiſes on univerſal grammar*.

Example ſeems to correſpond to what is here ſtated. Few men have written Engliſh with force and propriety, who have been wholly unacquainted with the learned languages. Our fineſt writers and ſpeakers have been men who amuſed themſelves during the whole of their lives with the peruſal of the claſſics. Nothing is generally more eaſy than to diſcover by his ſtyle, whether a man has been deprived of the advantages of a literary education.

A further argument in favour of the ſtudy of the

the Latin language, may be deduced from the nature of logic, or the art of thinking. Words are of the utmoſt importance to human underſtanding. Almoſt all the ideas employed by us in matters of reaſoning have been acquired by words. In our moſt retired contemplations we think for the moſt part in words; and upon recollection can in moſt caſes eaſily tell in what language we have been thinking. Without words, uttered, or thought upon, we could not probably carry on any long train of deduction. The ſcience of thinking therefore is little elſe than the ſcience of words. He that has not been accuſtomed to refine upon words, and diſcriminate their ſhades of meaning, will think and reaſon after a very inaccurate and ſlovenly manner. He that is not able to call his idea by various names, borrowed from various languages, will ſcarcely be able to conceive his idea in a way preciſe, clear and unconfuſed. If therefore a man were confined in a deſert iſland, and would never again have occaſion ſo much as to hear the ſound of his own voice, yet if at the ſame time he would ſucceſsfully cultivate his underſtanding, he muſt apply himſelf to a minute and perſevering ſtudy of words and language.

Laſtly, there is reaſon to believe that the

ſtudy of Latin would conſtitute a valuable part of education, though it were applied to no practical uſe, and were to be regarded as an affair of intellectual diſcipline only.

There are two qualities eſpecially neceſſary to any conſiderable improvement of human underſtanding; an ardent temper, and a habit of thinking with preciſion and order. The ſtudy of the Latin language is particularly conducive to the production of the laſt of theſe qualities.

In this reſpect the ſtudy of Latin and of geometry might perhaps be recommended for a ſimilar reaſon. Geometry it ſhould ſeem would always form a part of a liberal courſe of ſtudies. It has its direct uſes and its indirect. It is of great importance for the improvement of mechanics and the arts of life. It is eſſential to the juſt maſtery of aſtronomy and various other eminent ſciences. But its indirect uſes are perhaps of more worth than its direct. It cultivates the powers of the mind, and generates the moſt excellent habits. It eminently conduces to the making man a rational being, and accuſtoms him to a cloſeneſs of deduction, that is not eaſily made the dupe of ambiguity, and carries on an eternal war againſt prejudice and impoſition.

A ſimilar

A ſimilar benefit ſeems to reſult from the ſtudy of language and its inflections. All here is in order. Every thing is ſubjected to the moſt inflexible laws. The mind therefore which is accuſtomed to it, acquires habits of order, and of regarding things in a ſtate of clearneſs, diſcrimination and arrangement.

The diſcipline of mind here deſcribed is of ineſtimable value. He that is not initiated in the practice of cloſe inveſtigation, is conſtantly expoſed to the danger of being deceived. His opinions have no ſtandard; but are entirely at the mercy of his age, his country, the books he chances to read, or the company he happens to frequent. His mind is a wilderneſs. It may contain excellent materials, but they are of no uſe. They oppreſs and choak one another. He is ſubject to a partial madneſs. He is unable to regulate his mind, and ſails at the mercy of every breath of accident or caprice. Such a perſon is ordinarily found incapable of application or perſeverance. He may form brilliant projects; but he has neither the reſolution nor the power to carry any of them to its completion.

All talent may perhaps be affirmed to conſiſt in analyſis and diſſection, the turning a thing on all ſides, and examining it in all its variety

of views. An ordinary man ſees an object juſt as it happens to be preſented to him, and ſees no more. But a man of genius takes it to pieces, enquires into its cauſe and effects, remarks its internal ſtructure, and conſiders what would have been the reſult, if its members had been combined in a different way, or ſubjected to different influences. The man of genius gains a whole magazine of thoughts, where the ordinary man has received only one idea; and his powers are multiplied in proportion to the number of ideas upon which they are to be employed. Now there is perhaps nothing that contributes more eminently to this ſubtiliſing and multiplication of mind, than an attention to the ſtructure of language.

In matters of ſcience and the cultivation of the human mind it is not always ſufficiently attended to, that men are often eſſentially benefited by proceſſes, through which they have themſelves never actually paſſed, but which have been performed by their companions and contemporaries. The literary world is an immenſe community, the intercourſe of whoſe members is inceſſant; and it is very common for a man to derive eminent advantage from ſtudies in which he was himſelf never engaged. Thoſe inhabitants of any of the enlightened countries

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of Europe, who are accuſtomed to intellectual action, if they are not themſelves ſcholars, frequent the ſociety of ſcholars, and thus become familiar with ideas, the primary ſource of which is only to be found in an acquaintance with the learned languages. If therefore we would make a juſt eſtimate of the loſs that would be incurred by the abolition of claſſical learning, we muſt not build our eſtimate upon perſons of talent among ourſelves who have been deprived of that benefit. We muſt ſuppoſe the indirect, as well as the direct improvement that ariſes from this ſpecies of ſtudy, wholly baniſhed from the face of the earth.

Let it be taken for granted that the above arguments ſufficiently eſtabliſh the utility of claſſical learning; it remains to be determined whether it is neceſſary that it ſhould form a part of the education of youth. It may be alleged, that, if it be a deſirable acquiſition, it may with more propriety be made when a man is arrived at years of diſcretion, that it will then be made with leſs expence of labour and time, that the period of youth ought not to be burthened with ſo vexatious a taſk, and that our early years may be more advantageouſly ſpent in acquiring the knowledge of things, than of words.

In anſwer to theſe objections it may however

be remarked, that it is not certain that, if the acquiſition of the rudiments of claſſical learning be deferred to our riper years, it will ever be made. It will require ſtrong inclination and conſiderable leiſure. A few active and determined ſpirits will ſurmount the difficulty; but many who would derive great benefit from the acquiſition, will certainly never arrive at it.

Our early years, it is ſaid, may be more advantageouſly ſpent in acquiring the knowledge of things, than of words. But this is by no means ſo certain as at firſt ſight it may appear. If you attempt to teach children ſcience, commonly ſo called, it will perhaps be found in the ſequel that you have taught them nothing. You may teach them, like parrots, to repeat, but you can ſcarcely make them able to weigh the reſpective merits of contending hypotheſes. Many things that we go over in our youth, we find ourſelves compelled to recommence in our riper years under peculiar diſadvantages. The grace of novelty they have for ever loſt. We are encumbered with prejudices with reſpect to them; and, before we begin to learn, we muſt ſet ourſelves with a determined mind to unlearn the crude maſs of opinions concerning them that were once laboriouſly inculcated on us. But in the

the rudiments of language, it can ſcarcely be ſuppoſed that we ſhall have any thing that we ſhall ſee reaſon to wiſh obliterated from our minds.

The age of youth ſeems particularly adapted to the learning of words. The judgment is then ſmall; but the memory is retentive. In our riper years we remember paſſions, facts and arguments; but it is for the moſt part in youth only that we retain the very words in which they are conveyed. Youth eaſily contents itſelf with this ſpecies of employment, eſpecially where it is not inforced with particular ſeverity. Acquiſitions, that are inſupportably diſguſtful in riper years, are often found to afford to young perſons no contemptible amuſement.

It is not perhaps true that, in teaching languages to youth, we are impoſing on them an unneceſſary burthen. If we would produce right habits in the mind, it muſt be employed. Our early years muſt not be ſpent in lethargic indolence. An active maturity muſt be preceded by a buſy childhood. Let us not from a miſtaken compaſſion to infant years, ſuffer the mind to grow up in habits of inattention and irreſolution.

If the ſtudy of the claſſics have the effect above aſcribed to it of refining and multiplying

the intellectual powers, it will have this effect in a greater degree, the earlier it is introduced, and the more pliable and ductile is the mind that is employed on it. After a certain time the mind that was neglected in the beginning, grows aukward and unwieldy. Its attempts at alertneſs and grace are abortive. There is a certain ſlowneſs and ſtupidity that grows upon it. He therefore that would enlarge the mind and add to its quantity of exiſtence, muſt enter upon his taſk at an early period.

The benefits of claſſical learning would perhaps never have been controverted, if they had not been accompanied with unneceſſary rigours. Children learn to dance and to fence, they learn French and Italian and muſic, without its being found neceſſary to beat them for that purpoſe. A reaſonable man will not eaſily be perſuaded that there is ſome myſterious quality in claſſical learning that ſhould make it an exception to all other inſtances.

There is one obſervation ariſing from the view here taken on the ſubject, that probably deſerves to be ſtated. It has often been ſaid that claſſical learning is an excellent accompliſhment in men devoted to letters, but that it is ridiculous, in parents whoſe children are deſtined to more ordinary occupations, to deſire to give them a ſuperficial

ſuperficial acquaintance with Latin, which in the ſequel will infallibly fall into neglect. A concluſion oppoſite to this, is dictated by the preceding reflections. We can never certainly foreſee the future deſtination and propenſities of our children. But let them be taken for granted in the preſent argument, yet, if there be any truth in the above reaſonings, no portion of claſſical inſtruction, however ſmall, need be wholly loſt. Some refinement of mind and ſome clearneſs of thinking will almoſt infallibly reſult from grammatical ſtudies. Though the language itſelf ſhould ever after be neglected, ſome portion of a general ſcience has thus been acquired, which can ſcarcely be forgotten. Though our children ſhould be deſtined to the humbleſt occupation, that does not ſeem to be a ſufficient reaſon for our denying them the acquiſition of ſome of the moſt fundamental documents of human underſtanding.

ESSAY VII.

OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATION.

INNUMERABLE are the diſcuſſions that have originated in the comparative advantages of public and private education. The chief benefit attendant on private inſtruction ſeems to be the following.

There is no motive more powerful in its operations upon the human mind, than that which originates in ſympathy. A child muſt labour under peculiar diſadvantages, who is turned looſe among a multitude of other children, and left to make his way as he can, with no one ſtrongly to intereſt himſelf about his joys or his ſorrows, and no one eminently concerned as to whether he makes any improvement or not. In this unanimating ſituation, alone in the midſt of a crowd, there is great danger that he ſhould become ſullen and ſelfiſh. Knowing nothing of his ſpecies, but from the auſterity of diſcipline or the ſhock of contention, he muſt be expected to acquire a deſperate ſort of firmneſs and inflexibility. The ſocial affections are the chief

chief awakeners of man. It is difficult for me to feel much eagerneſs in the purſuit of that by which I expect to contribute to no man's gratification or enjoyment. I cannot entertain a generous complacency in myſelf, unleſs I find that there are others that ſet a value on me. I ſhall feel little temptation to the cultivation of faculties in which no one appears to take an intereſt. The firſt thing that gives ſpring and expanſion to the infant learner, is praiſe; not ſo much perhaps becauſe it gratifies the appetite of vanity, as from a liberal ſatisfaction in communicated and reciprocal pleaſure. To give pleaſure to another produces in me the moſt animated and unequivocal conſcioufneſs of exiſtence. Not only the paſſions of men, but their very judgments, are to a great degree the creatures of ſympathy. Who ever thought highly of his own talents, till he found thoſe talents obtaining the approbation of his neighbour? Who ever was ſatisfied with his own exertions, till they had been ſanctioned by the ſuffrage of a byſtander? And, if this ſcepticiſm occur in our matureſt years, how much more may it be expected to attend upon inexperienced childhood? The greateſt ſtimulus to ambition is for me to conceive that I am fitted for extraordinary things; and tho only mode perhaps to inſpire me

with ſelf-value, is for me to perceive that I am regarded as extraordinary by another. Thoſe things which are cenſured in a child, he learns to be aſhamed of; thoſe things for which he is commended, he contemplates in himſelf with pleaſure. If therefore you would have him eagerly deſirous of any attainment, you muſt thoroughly convince him that it is regarded by you with delight.

This advantage however of private education it is by no means impoſſible in a great degree to combine with public. Your child may be treated with eſteem and diſtinction in the intervals of his ſchool education, though perhaps theſe can ſcarcely follow him when he returns to the roof of inſtruction. Praiſe, to produce its juſt effect, ought not perhaps to be adminiſtered in too frequent doſes.

On the other hand, there is an advantage in public education ſimilar in its tendency to that juſt deſcribed. Private education is almoſt neceſſarily deficient in excitements. Society is the true awakener of man; and there can be little true ſociety, where the diſparity of diſpoſition is ſo great as between a boy and his preceptor. A kind of lethargy and languor creeps upon this ſpecies of ſtudies. Why ſhould he ſtudy? He has neither rival to ſurpaſs, nor companion

panion with whom to aſſociate his progreſs. Praiſe loſes its greateſt charm when given in ſolitude. It has not the pomp and enchantment, that under other circumſtances would accompany it. It has the appearance of a cold and concerted ſtratagem, to entice him to induſtry by indirect conſiderations. A boy, educated apart from boys, is a ſort of unripened hermit, with all the gloom and lazy-pacing blood incident to that profeſſion.

A ſecond advantage attendant upon public education is that a real ſcholar is ſeldom found to be produced in any other way. This is principally owing to the circumſtance that, in private education, the rudiments are ſcarcely ever ſo much dwelt upon; the inglorious and unglittering foundations are ſeldom laid with ſufficient care. A private pupil is too much of a man. He dwells on thoſe things which can be made ſubjects of reaſoning or ſources of amuſement; and eſcapes from the taſk of endleſs repetition. But public education is leſs attentive and complaiſant to this ſpecies of impatience. Society chears the rugged path, and beguiles the tediouſneſs of the way. It renders the mechanical part of literature ſupportable.

Thirdly, public education is beſt adapted for the generation of a robuſt and healthful mind.

All

All education is deſpotiſm. It is perhaps impoſſible for the young to be conducted without introducing in many caſes the tyranny of implicit obedience. Go there; do that; read; write; riſe; lie down; will perhaps for ever be the language addreſſed to youth by age. In private education there is danger that this ſuperintendence ſhould extend to too many particulars. The anxiety of individual affection watches the boy too narrowly, controls him too much, renders him too poor a ſlave. In public education there is comparative liberty. The boy knows how much of his time is ſubjected to his taſk-maſter, and how much is ſacredly his own. "Slavery, diſguiſe it as we will, is a bitter draught*;" and will always excite a mutinous and indignant ſpirit. But the moſt wretched of all ſlaveries is that which I endure alone; the whole weight of which falls upon my own ſhoulders, and in which I have no fellow-ſufferer to ſhare with me a particle of my burthen. Under this ſlavery the mind puſillanimouſly ſhrinks. I am left alone with my tyrant, and am utterly hopeleſs and forlorn. But, when I have companions in the houſe of my labour, my mind begins to erect itſelf. I place ſome glory in bearing my ſufferings with an equal mind. I do not feel

* Sterne.

annihilated

annihilated by my condition, but find that I alſo am ſomething. I adjuſt the account in my own mind with my taſk-maſter, and ſay, Thus far you may proceed; but there is a conqueſt that you cannot atchieve. The control exerciſed in private education is a contention of the paſſions; and I feel all the bitterneſs of being obliged unmurmuring to ſubmit the turbulence of my own paſſions to the turbulence of the paſſions of my preceptor. Anger glows in the breaſt of both the contending parties; my heart pants with indignation againſt the injuſtice, real or imaginary, that I endure; in the final triumph of my Brobdingnagian perſecutor I recogniſe the indulgence of hatred and revenge. But in the diſcipline of a public ſchool I ſubmit to the inflexible laws of nature and neceſſity, in the adminiſtration of which the paſſions have little ſhare. The maſter is an object placed in too diſtant a ſphere for me to enter into contention with him. I live in a little world of my own of which he is no member; and I ſcarcely think more of quarrelling with him, than a ſailor does of bearing malice againſt a tempeſt.

The conſequences of theſe two modes of education are uſually eminently conſpicuous, when the ſcholar is grown up into a man. The pupil of private education is commonly either aukward and

and ſilent, or pert, preſumptuous and pedantical. In either caſe he is out of his element, embarraſſed with himſelf, and chiefly anxious about how he ſhall appear. On the contrary, the pupil of public education uſually knows himſelf, and reſts upon his proper centre. He is eaſy and frank, neither eager to ſhow himſelf, nor afraid of being obſerved. His ſpirits are gay and uniform. His imagination is playful, and his limbs are active. Not engroſſed by a continual attention to himſelf, his generoſity is ever ready to break out; he is eager to fly to the aſſiſtance of others, and intrepid and bold in the face of danger. He has been uſed to contend only upon a footing of equality; or to endure ſuffering with equanimity and courage. His ſpirit therefore is unbroken; while the man, who has been privately educated, too often continues for the remainder of his life timid, incapable of a ready ſelf-poſſeſſion, and ever prone to prognoſticate ill of the contentions in which he may unavoidably be engaged.

We ſhall perhaps perceive a ſtill further advantage in public education, if we reflect that the ſcene which is to prepare us for the world, ſhould have ſome reſemblance to the world. It is deſirable that we ſhould be brought in early life to experience human events, to ſuffer human

man adverſities, and to obſerve human paſſions. To practiſe upon a ſmaller theatre the buſineſs of the world, muſt be one of the moſt deſirable ſources of inſtruction and improvement. Morals cannot be effectually taught, but where the topics and occaſions of moral conduct offer themſelves. A falſe tenderneſs for their children ſometimes induces parents to wiſh to keep them wholly unacquainted with the vices, the irregularities and injuſtice of their ſpecies. But this mode of proceeding ſeems to have a fatal effect. They are introduced to temptation unprepared, juſt in that tumultuous ſeaſon of human life when temptation has the greateſt power. They find men treacherous, deceitful and ſelfiſh; they find the moſt deſtructive and hateful purpoſes every where purſued; while their minds, unwarned of the truth, expected univerſal honeſty. They come into the world, as ignorant of every thing it contains, as uninſtructed in the ſcenes they have to encounter, as if they had paſſed their early years in a deſert iſland. Surely the advantages we poſſeſs for a gradual initiation of our youth in the economy of human life, ought not to be neglected. Surely we ought to anticipate and break the ſhock, which might otherwiſe perſuade them that the leſſons of education are an antiquated legend, and the practices

practices of the ſenſual and corrupt the only practices proper to men.

The objections to both the modes of education here diſcuſſed are of great magnitude. It is unavoidable to enquire, whether a middle way might not be ſelected, neither entirely public, nor entirely private, avoiding the miſchiefs of each, and embracing the advantages of both. This however is perhaps a ſubordinate queſtion, and of an importance purely temporary. We have here conſidered only the modes of education at this time in practice. Perhaps an adventurous and undaunted philoſophy would lead to the rejecting them altogether, and purſuing the inveſtigation of a mode totally diſſimilar. There is nothing ſo faſcinating in either, as ſhould in reaſon check the further excurſions of our underſtanding *.

* The ſubject here treated of, may be conſidered as taken up, at the point where the preſent diſquiſition leaves it, in Eſſay IX.

ESSAY

ESSAY VIII.

OF THE HAPPINESS OF YOUTH.

A SUBJECT upon which the poets of all ages have delighted to expatiate, is the happineſs of youth.

This is a topic which has uſually been handled by perſons advanced in life. I do not recollect that it has been ſelected as a theme for deſcription by the young themſelves.

It is eaſy to perceive why the opinion upon which it proceeds, has been ſo generally entertained.

The appearance of young perſons is eſſentially gratifying to the eye. Their countenances are uſually ſmooth; unmarked with wrinkles, unfurrowed by time. Their eye is ſprightly and roving. Their limbs elaſtic and active. Their temper kind, and eaſy of attachment. They are frank and inartificial; and their frankneſs ſhows itſelf in their very voice. Their gaiety is noiſy and obtruſive. Their ſpirits are inexhauſtible; and their ſorrows and their cares are ſpeedily diſmiſſed.

Such is frequently the appearance of youth. Are they happy? Probably not.

A reaſonable man will entertain a ſuſpicion of that eulogium of a condition, which is always made by perſons at a diſtance from it, never by the perſon himſelf.

I never was told, when a boy, of the ſuperior felicity of youth, but my heart revolted from the aſſertion. Give me at leaſt to be a man!

Children, it is ſaid, are free from the cares of the world. Are they without their cares? Of all cares thoſe that bring with them the greateſt conſolation, are the cares of independence.

There is no more certain ſource of exultation, than the conſciouſneſs that I am of ſome importance in the world. A child uſually feels that he is nobody. Parents, in the abundance of their providence, take good care to adminiſter to them the bitter recollection. How ſuddenly does a child riſe to an enviable degree of happineſs, who feels that he has the honour to be truſted and conſulted by his ſuperiors?

But of all the ſources of unhappineſs to a young perſon the greateſt is a ſenſe of ſlavery. How grievous the inſult, or how contemptible the ignorance, that tells a child that youth is the true ſeaſon of felicity, when he feels himſelf checked, controled, and tyranniſed over in a thouſand

thouſand ways? I am rebuked, and my heart is ready to burſt with indignation. A conſciouſneſs of the power aſſumed over me, and of the unſparing manner in which it is uſed, is intolerable. There is no moment free from the danger of harſh and dictatorial interruption; the periods, when my thoughtleſs heart began to loſe the ſenſe of its dependence, ſeem of all others moſt expoſed to it. There is no equality, no reaſoning, between me and my taſk-maſter. If I attempt it, it is conſidered as mutiny. If it be ſeemingly conceded, it is only the more cutting mockery. He is always in the right; right and power in theſe trials are found to be inſeparable companions. I deſpiſe myſelf for having forgotten my miſery, and ſuffered my heart to be deluded into a tranſitory joy. Dearly indeed, by twenty years of bondage, do I purchaſe the ſcanty portion of liberty, which the government of my country happens to concede to its adult ſubjects!

The condition of a negro-ſlave in the Weſt Indies, is in many reſpects preferable to that of the youthful ſon of a free-born European. The ſlave is purchaſed upon a view of mercantile ſpeculation; and, when he has finiſhed his daily portion of labour, his maſter concerns himſelf no further about him. But the watchful care

of the parent is endleſs. The youth is never free from the danger of its grating interference.

If he be treated with particular indulgence, and made what is called a ſpoiled child, this ſerves in ſome reſpects to aggravate the miſery of occaſional control. Deluded with the phantom of independence, he feels with double bitterneſs that he is only bound in fetters of gold.

Pain is always more vividly remembered than pleaſure, and conſtitutes ſomething more ſubſtantial in my recollections, when I come to caſt up the ſum of my life.

But not only are the pains of youth more frequent and galling, their pleaſures alſo are comparatively ſlight and worthleſs. The greateſt pleaſures of which the human mind is ſuſceptible, are the pleaſures of conſciouſneſs and ſympathy. Youth knows nothing of the delights of a refined taſte; the ſofteſt ſcenes of nature and art, are but lines and angles to him. He rarely experiences either ſelf-complacence or ſelf-approbation. His friendſhips have for the moſt part no ardour, and are the mere ſhadows and mimicry of friendſhip. His pleaſures are like the friſking and frolic of a calf.

Theſe pleaſures however, which have ſo often been the ſubject of lying exaggeration, deſerve

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to be ſtated with ſimplicity and truth. The organs of ſenſe are probably in a ſtate of the greateſt ſenſibility in an early period of life. Many of their perceptions are heightened, at years of maturity, by means of the aſſociation of ideas, and of the manner in which ideas of ſenſe and ideas of intellect are melted into a common maſs. But the ſimple pleaſures of ſenſe, that is, as many of them as are within the reach of youth, are at that age moſt exquiſitely felt. This is particularly obvious in the pleaſures of the palate. The caſe is the ſame with ſimple ſounds, light, colours, and every thing that agreeably impreſſes the organs of ſight.

Another circumſtance conducive to the pleaſures of youth, is the pliability and variableneſs of their minds. In the caſe of the adult, circumſtances make a durable impreſſion. The incidents that happen in the morning, modify my temper through the whole courſe of the evening. Grief does not eaſily yield its place to joy. If I have ſuffered to-day from the influence of unjuſt control, my temper becomes embittered. I ſit down in thoughtful ſilence, and abhor to be amuſed. What has once ſtrongly ſeized the affections either of exultation or ſor-

row, does not eaſily looſen its graſp, but pertinaciouſly retains its ſeat upon my heart.

In young perſons it is otherwiſe. Theirs is the tear, in many inſtances at leaſt, "forgot as ſoon as ſhed*." Their minds are like a ſheet of white paper, which takes any impreſſion that it is propoſed to make upon it. Their pleaſures therefore are, to a great degree, pure and unadulterated. This is a circumſtance conſiderably enviable.

The drawbacks to which it is ſubject, are, firſt, that their pleaſures are ſuperficial and worthleſs. They ſcarcely ever ſwell and elevate the mind. Secondly, they are pleaſures which cannot, to a child of any ſagacity, when reflected upon and ſummed together, conſtitute happineſs. He ſees that he was pleaſed, only becauſe he was ſeduced to forget himſelf. When his thoughts return home, he is pleaſed no longer. He is perhaps indignant againſt himſelf for having ſuffered ſo groſs a deluſion. He abhors the ſlavery that conſtitutes his lot, and loaths the nothingneſs of his condition.

Thoſe perſons have made a ſatire of life, but a ſatire impotent and nugatory, who have repre-

* Gray.

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ſented youth as the proper ſeaſon of joy. Though the world is a ſcene full of mixture and alloy, it is yet not ſo completely an abortion as this ſentiment would repreſent it. If you aſk men in general, whether they regard life as a bleſſing, they will perhaps heſitate: but they will recollect ſome feelings of exultation, ſome moments in which they felt with internal pride what it was to exiſt, and many of them will hereby be induced to pronounce in favour of life. But who can ſuppoſe himſelf a child, and look with exultation upon that ſpecies of exiſtence? The principal ſources of manly pleaſure probably are, the feeling that we alſo are of ſome importance and account, the conſcious power of conforming our actions to the dictates of our own underſtanding, an approving ſenſe of the rectitude of our own determinations, and an affectionate and heroical ſympathy in the welfare of others. To every one of theſe young perſons are almoſt uniformly ſtrangers.

This is probably a fair and impartial view of the pleaſures and pains of the young. It would be highly unjuſt to ſuppoſe that the adult who inflict theſe pains, are generally actuated by malignity. In ſome inſtances, where the miſcarriage has been moſt complete, the kindneſs and diſintereſted zeal of its author has been eminent.

But kindneſs and diſintereſted zeal muſt be in a great meaſure nugatory, where the methods purſued are founded in error. If the condition of the young is to be pitied, the condition of thoſe who ſuperintend them, is ſometimes equally worthy of compaſſion. The object of true philoſophy will never be to generate the hateful paſſions; it enters impartially into the miſeries of the tyrant and the ſlave. The intention therefore of theſe ſpeculations, ought to be conſidered as that of relieving, at once, the well-meaning, but miſguided oppreſſor, and the unfortunate and helpleſs oppreſſed.

Conſiderations, ſuch as we are here diſcuſſing, may indeed terrify the timid and cowardly parent or inſtructor; they will not have that effect upon the generous and the wiſe. Such is the condition of terreſtrial exiſtence. We cannot move a limb without the riſk of deſtroying animal life, and, which is worſe, producing animal torture. We cannot exiſt without generating evil. The more active and earneſt we are, the more miſchief ſhall we effect. The wiſeſt legiſlator, the moſt admirable and exemplary author, has probably, by his errors, occaſioned a greater ſum of private miſery, than ever flowed from the agency of any ſupine and torpid, however worthleſs, individual. We muſt

therefore

therefore ſteel ourſelves againſt this inevitable circumſtance of our lot; and exert our underſtandings in ſober deliberation, to diſcover how we may be made authors of the greateſt overbalance of good.

But, ſome will ſay, this depreſſing condition of human life, ought carefully to be concealed from us, not obtruded upon our view.

The brave man will never ſhrink from a calm and rational reſponſibility. Let us put him in the place of the inſtructor in queſtion; he will ſay to his pupil, I know I ſhall occaſion you many calamities; this with all my diligence and good will I cannot avoid. But I will endeavour to procure for you a greater ſum of happineſs than it is probable any other perſon, who ſhould be ſubſtituted in my place, would do; I will endeavour ultimately to render you wiſe, and virtuous, and active, and independent, and ſelf-approving, and contented.

There is a very obvious reaſon why ſuch diſcuſſions as that in which we are engaged, if purſued with an adventurous and ſcrutiniſing ſpirit, ſhould have an appearance of partiality, and ſeem to eſpouſe the cauſe of the young againſt the adult. There are certain modes of education eſtabliſhed in ſociety; theſe are open to our inſpection; we may inveſtigate them with accu-

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racy and minuteneſs. The hypothetical modes which appear in ſpeculation to have ſome advantages over them, are for the moſt part yet untried; we cannot follow them in their detail; we have often but an imperfect view of their great outline. Defects therefore we can point out with confidence, while it is only in an obſcure and ambiguous ſtyle that we can diſcourſe of their remedies.

In treating on the ſubject of education, it muſt of courſe be againſt the inſtructor, not his pupil, that we muſt direct our animadverſions. The pupil is the clay in the hands of the artificer; I muſt expoſtulate with him, not with his materials. Books of education are not written to inſtruct the young how they are to form their ſeniors, but to aſſiſt the adult in diſcovering how to faſhion the youthful mind.

It would be peculiarly unfortunate, if documents, the object of which is to improve education, and conſequently to inſpire the adult with new ardour, ſhould be judged to have a diſcouraging tendency. Inſtructors indeed, as we now find them, are too often unworthy and unamiable; but inſtruction is not on that account a leſs generous and lofty taſk. It is incident alike to the profeſſors of every art to enumerate difficulties and unfold them; to ſhow how

how "Alps on Alps ariſe*," in oppoſition to the daring adventurer. Having done ſo, they muſt always in a conſiderable degree leave him to ſurmount the obſtacles for himſelf. Language is adequate to the firſt of theſe objects; it ſinks under the delicacy and individualities of the ſecond. The groveling and feeble-hearted are conſequently diſcouraged; they deſert the vocation they haſtily choſe. But the courage of the generouſly ambitious is by this means elevated to its nobleſt height.

* Pope.

ESSAY

ESSAY IX.

OF THE COMMUNICATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

IN what manner would reaſon, independently of the received modes and practices of the world, teach us to communicate knowledge?

Liberty is one of the moſt deſirable of all ſublunary advantages. I would willingly therefore communicate knowledge, without infringing, or with as little as poſſible violence to, the volition and individual judgment of the perſon to be inſtructed.

Again; I deſire to excite a given individual to the acquiſition of knowledge. The only poſſible method in which I can excite a ſenſitive being to the performance of a voluntary action, is by the exhibition of motive.

Motives are of two ſorts, intrinſic and extrinſic. Intrinſic motives are thoſe which ariſe from the inherent nature of the thing recommended. Extrinſic motives are thoſe which have no conſtant and unalterable connection with the thing recommended, but are combined

with it by accident or at the pleaſure of ſome individual.

Thus, I may recommend ſome ſpecies of knowledge by a diſplay of the advantages which will neceſſarily attend upon its acquiſition, or flow from its poſſeſſion. Or, on the other hand, I may recommend it deſpotically, by allurements or menaces, by ſhowing that the purſuit of it will be attended with my approbation, and that the neglect of it will be regarded by me with diſpleaſure.

The firſt of theſe claſſes of motives is unqueſtionably the beſt. To be governed by ſuch motives is the pure and genuine condition of a rational being. By exerciſe it ſtrengthens the judgment. It elevates us with a ſenſe of independence. It cauſes a man to ſtand alone, and is the only method by which he can be rendered truly an individual, the creature, not of implicit faith, but of his own underſtanding.

If a thing be really good, it can be ſhown to be ſuch. If you cannot demonſtrate its excellence, it may well be ſuſpected that you are no proper judge of it. Why ſhould not I be admitted to decide, upon that which is to be acquired by the application of my labour?

Is it neceſſary that a child ſhould learn a thing, before it can have any idea of its value? It is probable

probable that there is no one thing that it is of eminent importance for a child to learn. The true object of juvenile education, is to provide, againſt the age of five and twenty, a mind well regulated, active, and prepared to learn *. Whatever will inſpire habits of induſtry and obſervation, will ſufficiently anſwer this purpoſe. Is it not poſſible to find ſomething that will fulfil theſe conditions, the benefit of which a child ſhall underſtand, and the acquiſition of which he may be taught to deſire? Study with deſire is real activity: without deſire it is but the ſemblance and mockery of activity. Let us not, in the eagerneſs of our haſte to educate, forget all the ends of education.

The moſt deſirable mode of education therefore, in all inſtances where it ſhall be found ſufficiently practicable, is that which is careful that all the acquiſitions of the pupil ſhall be preceded and accompanied by deſire. The beſt motive to learn, is a perception of the value of the thing learned. The worſt motive, without deciding whether or not it be neceſſary to have recourſe to it, may well be affirmed to be conſtraint and fear. There is a motive between theſe, leſs pure than the firſt, but not ſo diſpleaſ-

* See the cloſe of Eſſay I.

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ing as the laſt, which is deſire, not ſpringing from the intrinſic excellence of the object, but from the accidental attractions which the teacher may have annexed to it.

According to the received modes of education, the maſter goes firſt, and the pupil follows. According to the method here recommended, it is probable that the pupil ſhould go firſt, and the maſter follow *. If I learn nothing but what I deſire to learn, what ſhould hinder me from being my own preceptor?

The firſt object of a ſyſtem of inſtructing, is to give to the pupil a motive to learn. We have ſeen how far the eſtabliſhed ſyſtems fail in this office.

The ſecond object is to ſmooth the difficulties which preſent themſelves in the acquiſition of knowledge.

The method of education here ſuggeſted is incomparably the beſt adapted to the firſt of theſe

* To ſome perſons this expreſſion may be ambiguous. The ſort of "going firſt" and "following" here cenſured, may be compared to one perſon's treading over a portion of ground, and another's coming immediately after, treading in his footſteps. The adult muſt undoubtedly be ſuppoſed to have acquired their information before the young; and they may at proper intervals incite and conduct their diligence, but not ſo as to ſuperſede in them the exerciſe of their own diſcretion.

objects.

objects. It is ſufficiently competent to anſwer the purpoſes of the laſt.

Nothing can be more happily adapted to remove the difficulties of inſtruction, than that the pupil ſhould firſt be excited to deſire knowledge, and next that his difficulties ſhould be ſolved for him, and his path cleared, as often and as ſoon as he thinks proper to deſire it.

This plan is calculated entirely to change the face of education. The whole formidable apparatus which has hitherto attended it, is ſwept away. Strictly ſpeaking, no ſuch characters are left upon the ſcene as either preceptor or pupil. The boy, like the man, ſtudies, becauſe he deſires it. He proceeds upon a plan of his own invention, or which, by adopting, he has made his own. Every thing beſpeaks independence and equality. The man, as well as the boy, would be glad in caſes of difficulty to conſult a perſon more informed than himſelf. That the boy is accuſtomed almoſt always to conſult the man, and not the man the boy, is to be regarded rather as an accident, than any thing eſſential. Much even of this would be removed, if we remembered that the moſt inferior judge may often, by the varieties of his apprehenſion, give valuable information to the moſt enlightened. The boy however ſhould be conſulted by the man unaffectedly,

unaffectedly, not according to any preconcerted ſcheme, or for the purpoſe of perſuading him that he is what he is not.

There are three conſiderable advantages which would attend upon this ſpecies of education.

Firſt, liberty. Three fourths of the ſlavery and reſtraint that are now impoſed upon young perſons would be annihilated at a ſtroke.

Secondly, the judgment would be ſtrengthened by continual exerciſe. Boys would no longer learn their leſſons after the manner of parrots. No one would learn without a reaſon, ſatisfactory to himſelf, why he learned; and it would perhaps be well, if he were frequently prompted to aſſign his reaſons. Boys would then conſider for themſelves, whether they underſtood what they read. To know when and how to aſk a queſtion is no contemptible part of learning. Sometimes they would paſs over difficulties, and neglect eſſential preliminaries; but then the nature of the thing would ſpeedily recal them, and induce them to return to examine the tracts which before had been overlooked. For this purpoſe it would be well that the ſubjects of their juvenile ſtudies ſhould often be diſcuſſed, and that one boy ſhould compare his progreſs and his competence to decide in

certain points with thoſe of another. There is nothing that more ſtrongly excites our enquiries than this mode of detecting our ignorance.

Thirdly, to ſtudy for ourſelves is the true method of acquiring habits of activity. The horſe that goes round in a mill, and the boy that is anticipated and led by the hand in all his acquirements, are not active. I do not call a wheel that turns round fifty times in a minute, active. Activity is a mental quality. If therefore you would generate habits of activity, turn the boy looſe in the fields of ſcience. Let him explore the path for himſelf. Without increaſing his difficulties, you may venture to leave him for a moment, and ſuffer him to aſk himſelf the queſtion before he aſks you, or, in other words, to aſk the queſtion before he receives the information. Far be it from the ſyſtem here laid down, to increaſe the difficulties of youth. No, it diminiſhes them a hundred fold. Its office is to produce inclination; and a willing temper makes every burthen light.

Laſtly, it is the tendency of this ſyſtem to produce in the young, when they are grown up to the ſtature of men, a love of literature. The eſtabliſhed modes of education produce the oppoſite effect, unleſs in a fortunate few, who, by the celerity of their progreſs, and the diſtinc-

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tions they obtain, perhaps eſcape from the general influence. But, in the majority of caſes, the memory of our ſlavery becomes aſſociated with the ſtudies we purſued, and it is not till after repeated ſtruggles, that thoſe things can be rendered the objects of our choice, which were for ſo long a time the themes of compulſion. This is particularly unfortunate, that we ſhould conquer with much labour and application the difficulties that beſet the entrance of literature, and then ſhould quit it when perhaps, but for this unfortunate aſſociation, the obſtacles were all ſmoothed, and the improvement to be made was attended through all its ſteps with unequivocal delight.

There is but one conſiderable objection that ſeems to oppoſe all theſe advantages. The preceptor is terrified at the outſet, and ſays, How ſhall I render the labours of literature an object of deſire, and ſtill more how ſhall I maintain this deſire in all its vigour, in ſpite of the diſcouragements that will daily occur, and in ſpite of the quality incident to almoſt every human paſſion, that its fervour diſappears in proportion as the novelty of the object ſubſides?

But let us not haſtily admit this for an inſuperable objection. If the plan here propoſed augments the difficulties of the teacher in one par-

ticular point, let it be remembered that it relieves him from an inſufferable burthen in other reſpects.

Nothing can be more pitiable than the condition of the inſtructor in the preſent modes of education. He is the worſt of ſlaves. He is conſigned to the ſevereſt of impriſonments. He is condemned to be perpetually engaged in handling and rehandling the foundations of ſcience. Like the unfortunate wretch upon whom the lot has fallen in a city reduced to extremities, he is deſtroyed, that others may live. Among all the hardſhips he is compelled to ſuffer, he endeavours to conſole himſelf with the recollection that his office is uſeful and patriotic. But even this conſolation is a ſlender one. He is regarded as a tyrant by thoſe under his juriſdiction, and he is a tyrant. He mars their pleaſures. He appoints to each his portion of loathed labour. He watches their irregularities and their errors. He is accuſtomed to ſpeak to them in tones of dictation and cenſure. He is the beadle to chaſtiſe their follies. He lives alone in the midſt of a multitude. His manners, even when he goes into the world, are ſpoiled with the preciſion of pedantry and the inſolence of deſpotiſm. His uſefulneſs and his patriotiſm therefore, have ſome reſemblance to thoſe of a chimney-

chimney-ſweeper and a ſcavenger, who, if their exiſtence is of any benefit to mankind, are however rather tolerated in the world, than thought entitled to the teſtimonies of our gratitude and eſteem.

ESSAY X.

OF COHABITATION.

NO ſubject is of more importance in the morality of private life than that of cohabitation.

Every man has his ill humours, his fits of peeviſhneſs and exacerbation. Is it better that he ſhould ſpend theſe upon his fellow beings, or ſuffer them to ſubſide of themſelves?

It ſeems to be one of the moſt important of the arts of life, that men ſhould not come too near each other, or touch in too many points. Exceſſive familiarity is the bane of ſocial happineſs.

There is no practice to which the human mind adapts itſelf with greater facility, than that of apologiſing to itſelf for its miſcarriages, and giving to its errors the outſide and appearance of virtues.

The paſſionate man, who feels himſelf continually prompted to knock every one down that ſeems to him pertinacious and perverſe, never fails to expatiate upon the efficacy of this mode of correcting error, and to ſatiriſe with great vehemence the Utopian abſurdity of him who

who would ſet them right by ways of mildneſs and expoſtulation.

The dogmatiſt, who, ſatisfied of the truth of his own opinions, treats all other modes of thinking as abſurd, and can practiſe no forbearance for the prejudices of his neighbours, can readily inform you of the benefit which the mind receives from a rude ſhock, and the unceaſing duration of errors which are only encountered with kindneſs and reaſon.

The man who lives in a ſtate of continual waſpiſhneſs and bickering, eaſily alleges in his favour the ſalutary effects which ariſe from giving pain, and that men are not to be cured of their follies but by making them ſeverely feel the ill conſequences that attend on them.

The only method therefore of accurately trying a maxim of private morality, is to put out of the queſtion all perſonal retroſpect, and every inducement to the apologiſing for our own habits, and to examine the ſubject purely upon its general merits.

In the education of youth no reſource is more frequent than to a harſh tone and a peremptory manner. The child does amiſs, and he is rebuked. If he overlook this treatment, and make overtures of kindneſs, the anſwer is, No,

indeed, I ſhall take no notice of you, for you have done wrong.

All this is the exceſs of familiarity.

The tyrant governor practiſes this, and applauds himſelf for his virtue. He reviews his conduct with ſelf-complacence; he ſees in fancy the admirable conſequences that will reſult from it; and, if it fails, he congratulates himſelf at leaſt that he has proceeded with the moſt exemplary virtue.

He does not know that, through the whole ſcene, he has been only indulging the moſt ſhameful vices. He had merely been accumulating a certain portion of black bile, and in this proceeding he has found a vent for it. There was no atom of virtue or benevolence in his conduct. He was exerciſing his deſpotiſm in ſecurity, becauſe its object was unable to reſiſt. He was giving ſcope to the overflowings of his ſpite, and the child, who was placed under his direction, was the unfortunate victim.

There is a reverence that we owe to every thing in human ſhape. I do not ſay that a child is the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with powers of reaſoning, with ſenſations of pleaſure and pain, and with principles of morality; and that in this deſcrip-

tion

tion is contained abundant cauſe for the exerciſe of reverence and forbearance. By the ſyſtem of nature he is placed by himſelf; he has a claim upon his little ſphere of empire and diſcretion; and he is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence.

Violate not thy own image in the perſon of thy offspring. That image is ſacred. He that does violence to it, is the genuine blaſphemer. The moſt fundamental of all the principles of morality is the conſideration and deference that man owes to man; nor is the helpleſſneſs of childhood by any means unentitled to the benefit of this principle. The neglect of it among mankind at large, is the principal ſource of all the injuſtice, the revenge, the bloodſhed and the wars, that have ſo long ſtained the face of nature. It is hoſtile to every generous and expanſive ſentiment of our dignity; it is incompatible with the delicious tranſports of ſelf-complacence.

The object of the harſhneſs thus employed, is to bring the delinquent to a ſenſe of his error. It has no ſuch tendency. It ſimply proves to him, that he has ſomething elſe to encounter, beſide the genuine conſequences of his miſtake; and that there are men, who, when they cannot convince by reaſon, will not heſitate to overbear

by

by force. Pertinacious and perſuaded as he was before in the proceeding he adopted, he is confirmed in his perſuaſion, by the tacit confeſſion which he aſcribes to your conduct, of the weakneſs of your cauſe. He finds nothing ſo conſpicuous in your behaviour as anger and ill humour, and anger and ill humour have very little tendency to impreſs upon a prejudiced ſpectator an opinion of the juſtice of your cauſe. The direct reſult of your proceeding, is to fill him with indignation againſt your deſpotiſm, to inſpire him with a deep ſenſe of the indignity to which he is ſubjected, and to perpetuate in his mind a deteſtation of the leſſon that occaſioned his pain.

If we would aſcertain the true means of conviction, we have only to ſubſtitute in our minds, inſtead of this child placed under our care, a child with whom we have ſlight acquaintance, and no vicious habits of familiarity. I will ſuppoſe that we have no prejudices againſt this child, but every diſpoſition to benefit him. I would then aſk any man of urbane manners and a kind temper, whether he would endeavour to correct the error of this ſtranger child, by forbidding looks, harſh tones and ſevere language?

No; he would treat the child in this reſpect as he would an adult of either ſex. He would

know that to inſpire hatred to himſelf and diſtaſte to his leſſons, was not the moſt promiſing road to inſtruction. He would endeavour to do juſtice to his views of the ſubject in diſcuſſion; he would communicate his ideas with all practicable perſpicuity; but he would communicate them with every mark of conciliation and friendly attention. He would not mix them with tones of acrimony, and airs of lofty command. He would perceive that ſuch a proceeding had a direct tendency to defeat his purpoſe. He would deliver them as hints for conſideration, not as ſo many unappealable deciſions from a chair of infallibility. But we treat adults of either ſex, when upon a footing of undue familiarity, our wife or our comrade, in a great degree as we do children. We lay aſide the arts of ingenuous perſuaſion; we forſake the mildneſs of expoſtulation; and we expect them to bow to the deſpotiſm of command or the impatience of anger. No ſooner have we adopted this conduct, than in this caſe, as in the caſe of education, we are perfectly ready to prove that it has every feature of wiſdom, profound judgment and liberal virtue.

The ill humour which is ſo prevalent through all the different walks of life, is the reſult of familiarity,

miliarity, and conſequently of cohabitation. If we did not ſee each other too frequently, we ſhould accuſtom ourſelves to act reaſonably and with urbanity. But, according to a well known maxim, familiarity breeds contempt. The firſt and moſt fundamental principle in the intercourſe of man with man, is reverence; but we ſoon ceaſe to reverence what is always before our eyes. Reverence is a certain collectedneſs of the mind, a pauſe during which we involuntarily impreſs ourſelves with the importance of circumſtances and the dignity of perſons. In order that we may properly exerciſe this ſentiment, the occaſions for calling it forth towards any particular individual, ſhould be economiſed and rare. It is true, that genuine virtue requires of us a certain frankneſs and unreſerve. But it is not leſs true, that it requires of us a quality in ſome degree contraſted with this, that we ſet a guard upon the door of our lips, that we carefully watch over our paſſions, that we never forget what we owe to ourſelves, and that we maintain a vigilant conſciouſneſs ſtrictly animadverting and commenting upon the whole ſeries of our actions.

Theſe remarks are dictated with all the licence of a ſceptical philoſophy. Nothing, it will be retorted, is more eaſy than to raiſe objections.

All

All that is moſt ancient and univerſal among men is liable to attack. It is a vulgar taſk to deſtroy; the difficulty is to build.

With this vulgar and humble office however let us reſt contented upon the preſent occaſion. Though nothing further ſhould reſult than hints for other men to purſue, our time perhaps will not have been miſemployed.

Every thing human has its advantages and diſadvantages. This, which is true as a general maxim, is probably true of cohabitation.

There are two different uſes that may flow from theſe hints. Grant that they prove cohabitation fundamentally an erroneous ſyſtem. It is then reaſonable that they ſhould excite the inquiſitive to contemplate and unfold a mode of ſociety, in which it ſhould be ſuperſeded. Suppoſe for a moment that cohabitation is indiſpenſible, or that its benefits outweigh thoſe of an oppoſite principle. Yet the developing its fundamental evil, is perhaps of all modes of proceeding beſt calculated to excite us to the reduction and abridgement of this evil, if we cannot annihilate it.

ESSAY

ESSAY XI.

OF REASONING AND CONTENTION.

THERE is a vice, frequently occurring in our treatment of thoſe who depend upon us, which is ludicrous in its appearance, but attended with the moſt painful conſequences to thoſe who are the objects of it. This is, when we ſet out with an intention of fairneſs and equality with reſpect to them, which we find ourſelves afterwards unable to maintain.

Let it be ſuppoſed that a parent, accuſtomed to exerciſe a high authority over his children, and to require from them the moſt uncontending ſubmiſſion, has recently been convinced of the impropriety of his conduct. He calls them together, and confeſſes his error. He has now diſcovered that they are rational beings as well as himſelf, that he ought to act the part of their friend, and not of their maſter; and he encourages them, when they differ in opinion with him as to the conduct they ought to purſue, to ſtate their reaſons, and proceed to a fair and equal examination of the ſubject.

If

If this mode of proceeding can ever be ſalutary, it muſt be to a real diſcuſſion that they are invited, and not to the humiliating ſcene of a mock diſcuſſion.

The terms muſt be juſt and impartial.

If either party convince the other, there is then no difficulty in the caſe. The difference of opinion is vaniſhed, and the proceeding to be held will be correſpondent.

But it perhaps more frequently happens, in the tangled ſkein of human affairs, if both parties without indolence or ill faith endeavour to do juſtice to their reſpective opinions, that no immediate change of ſentiment is produced, and that both ſeem to leave off where they began. What is to be the reſult in this caſe?

If the terms are impartial, the child is then to be victorious. For the conduct to be held is his, and ought therefore, ſo far as equality is concerned, to be regulated by the dictates of his judgment.

But it is more frequent for the parent to ſay, No, I have heard you out; you have not convinced me; and therefore nothing remains for you but to ſubmit.

Now in this caſe, putting myſelf in the place of the child, I have no heſitation to reply, Upon theſe terms I cannot enter the liſts with you. I

had

had rather a thouſand times know at once what it is to which I muſt ſubmit, and comply with a grace, than have my mind warmed with the diſcuſſion, be incited to recollect and to ſtate with force a whole ſeries of arguments, and then be obliged to quit the field with diſgrace, and follow at the chariot-wheels of my antagoniſt.

But the caſe is in reality worſe than this. The child may be unprejudiced and open to conviction. But it is little probable that the parent does not bring a judgment already formed to the diſcuſſion, ſo as to leave a ſmall chance that the arguments of the child will be able to change it. The child will ſcarcely be able to offer any thing new, and has to contend with an antagoniſt equally beyond his match in powers of mind and body.

The terms of the debate therefore are, firſt, *If you do not convince me, you muſt act as if I had convinced you.* Secondly, I enter the liſts with all the weight of long practice and all the pride of added years, and there is ſcarcely the ſhadow of a hope that you will convince me.

The reſult of ſuch a ſyſtem of proceeding will be extreme unhappineſs.

Where the parent is not prepared to grant a real and *bona fide* equality, it is of the utmoſt importance that he ſhould avoid the ſemblance

of it. Do not open a treaty as between independent ſtates, when you are both able and willing to treat the neighbour-ſtate as a conquered province.

Place me in the condition of a ſlave, I ſhall perhaps be able to endure it. Human nature is capable of accommodating itſelf to a ſtate of ſubjection, eſpecially when the authority of the maſter is exerciſed with mildneſs, and ſeems to be directed in a conſiderable degree to promote the welfare of the dependent.

The ſituation I deprecate is that of a ſlave, who is endowed with the ſhow and appearance of freedom. What I aſk at your hand is, that you would not, without a good and ſolid meaning, waken all the ſecret ſprings of my nature, and call forth the ſwelling ambition of my ſoul. Do not fill me with the ſublime emotions of independence, and teach me to take up my reſt among the ſtars of heaven, if your ultimate purpoſe be to draw cloſer my fetters, and pull me down unwilling to the ſurface of the earth. This is a torture more exquiſite and refined than all that Sicilian tyrants ever invented.

The perſon who has been thus treated, turns reſtleſs upon the bed of his dungeon. He feels every thing that can give poignancy to his fate. He burns with indignation againſt the hourly

events of his life. His ſenſe of ſuffering, which would otherwiſe be blunted, is by this refinement, like the vitals of Prometheus, for ever preyed upon, and for ever renewed.

The child, whoſe education has been thus miſtaken, will be diſtinguiſhed by a contentious and mutinous ſpirit. His activity will at firſt be excited by the invitation perpetually to debate the commands he receives. He will exerciſe his ingenuity in the invention of objections, and will take care not to loſe his office of deliberating counſellor by any neglect of the functions that characteriſe it. He will acquire a habit of finding difficulties and diſadvantages in every thing. He will be pleaſed to involve you in perpetual diſpute, and to ſhow that the acuteneſs of his talent is not inferior to yours. He will become indifferent to the queſtion of truth and falſhood, and will exhibit the arts of a practiſed ſophiſter. In this he will at firſt find gratification and amuſement. But he heaps up for himſelf hours of bitterneſs. He will be rugged, harſh, tempeſtuous and untractable; and he will learn to loath almoſt the conſciouſneſs of exiſtence.

The way to avoid this error in the treatment of youth, is to fix in our mind thoſe points from which we may perceive that we ſhall not ultimately

mately recede, and, whenever they occur, to preſcribe them with mildneſs of behaviour, but with firmneſs of deciſion. It is not neceſſary that in ſo doing we ſhould really ſubtract any thing from the independence of youth. They ſhould no doubt have a large portion of independence; it ſhould be reſtricted only in caſes of extraordinary emergency; but its boundaries ſhould be clear, evident and unequivocal. It is not neceſſary that, like ſome fooliſh parents, we ſhould tenaciouſly adhere to every thing that we have once laid down, and prefer that heaven ſhould periſh rather than we ſtand convicted of error. We ſhould acknowledge ourſelves fallible; we ſhould admit no quackery and falſe airs of dignity and wiſdom into our ſyſtem of proceeding; we ſhould retract unaffectedly and with grace whenever we find that we have fallen into miſtake. But we ſhould rather ſhun, than invite, controverſy into matters that will probably at laſt be decided from authority. Thus conducting ourſelves, we ſhall generate no reſentful paſſions in the breaſts of our juniors. They will ſubmit themſelves to our peremptory deciſions, in the ſame ſpirit as they ſubmit to the laws of inanimate neceſſity.

It were to be wiſhed that no human creature were obliged to do any thing but from the dic-

tates of his own underſtanding. But this ſeems to be, for the preſent at leaſt, impracticable in the education of youth. If we cannot avoid ſome exerciſe of empire and deſpotiſm, all that remains for us is, that we take care that it be not exerciſed with aſperity, and that we do not add an inſulting familiarity or unneceſſary contention, to the indiſpenſible aſſertion of ſuperiority.

ESSAY XII.

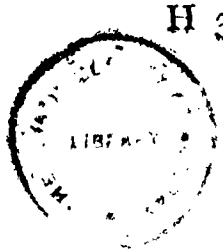
OF DECEPTION AND FRANKNESS.

THERE is no conduct in the education of youth more pernicious in its conſequences, than the practice of deception.

It cuts off all generous reciprocity between children and perſons of mature age. It generates a ſuſpicious temper, which, inſtead of confiding in your demonſtrations and aſſertions, exerciſes itſelf in perpetual watchfulneſs, expecting continually to detect your inſincerity.

It teaches our children the practice of ſimilar arts, and, as they have been overreached by their ſuperiors, to endeavour to overreach them in return. What can be more unjuſt than the conduct of thoſe parents, who, while they pride themſelves in the ingenuity with which they deceive their children, expreſs the utmoſt ſeverity and diſpleaſure, when their children attempt a repriſal, and are detected in ſchemes of ſimilar adroitneſs?

It would be a uſeful taſk to enumerate the various ſorts of deception which it is the cuſtom



of ordinary education ſucceſſively to impoſe upon its ſubjects.

The practice of deception is one of thoſe vices of education that are moſt early introduced into the treatment of youth.

If the nurſe find a difficulty in perſuading the child to go to ſleep, ſhe will pretend to go to ſleep along with it. If the parent wiſh his youngeſt ſon to go to bed before his brothers, he will order the elder ones up ſtairs, with a permiſſion to return as ſoon as they can do it unobſerved. If the mother is going out for a walk or a viſit, ſhe will order the child upon ſome pretended occaſion to a diſtant part of the houſe, till ſhe has made her eſcape.

It is a deception too groſs to be inſiſted on, to threaten children with pretended puniſhments, that you will cut off their ears; that you will put them into the well; that you will give them to the old man; that there is ſomebody coming down the chimney to take them away.

There is a paſſage of the Bible that ſeems to be of this ſort, where it is ſaid, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and deſpiſeth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it out, and the young eagles ſhall eat it *."

* Proverbs, Ch. xxx. ver. 17.

This

This infantine doctrine reſpecting the puniſhment of miſdemeanour, is ſucceeded by another, which, though leſs groſs, is equally pernicious. This is, whenever we utter any leſſons of pretended morality, which have been taken up by us upon truſt, and not duly conſidered. There is in the world a long eſtabliſhed jargon of this kind, ſufficiently adapted to terrify thoſe, who are to be terrified by a repetition of well ſounding words. It generally happens however that, after the firſt ſtage of human life is concluded, this ſort of morality appears ſufficiently adapted for every body's uſe, but our own.

Nothing can be more ſubverſive of true morality, of genuine principle and integrity, than this empty and unmeaning cant. Morality has a foundation in the nature of things, has reaſons too ſtrong for ſophiſtry to ſhake, or any future improvement of human underſtanding to undermine. But this rotten morality will not abide the ſlighteſt impartial examination; and, when it is removed, the diſſipated and thoughtleſs imagine they have detected the fallacy of every thing that bears the much injured name of morality.

It has been remarked that there is a commonplace ſort of conſolation for diſtreſs, which ſounds ſufficiently ſpecious in the ears of men at eaſe,

but appears unſatisfactory, and almoſt inſulting to thoſe who ſtand in need of conſolation. The like remark might be extended to every branch of morality.

If I would diſſuade a man from drunkenneſs, gaming, or any other vice, nothing can be more incumbent upon me, than to examine carefully its temptations and conſequences, and afterwards to deſcribe them with ſimplicity and truth. I ought not to utter a word upon the ſubject that is not pregnant with meaning. I ſhould take it for granted that the perſon with whom I expoſtulate is a rational being, and that there are ſtrong conſiderations and reaſons that have led him to his preſent conduct. Morality is nothing more than a calculation of pleaſures; nothing therefore which is connected with pleaſurable ſenſation, can be foreign to, or ought to be deſpiſed in, a queſtion of morality. If I utter in perſpicuous language the genuine deductions of my underſtanding, and reſults of my reflection, it is ſcarcely in human nature that I ſhall not obtain an attentive hearing. But there is a common-place language upon ſubjects of morality, vague and undefined in its meaning, embracing ſome truth, but full of abſurd prejudice, which cannot produce much effect upon the hearer. It has been repeated a thouſand times; it has been

delivered

delivered down from age to age; and inſtead of being, what all morality ought to be, an impreſſive appeal to the ſtrongeſt and moſt unalterable ſentiments of the human heart, is the heavieſt and moſt tedious homily that ever inſulted human patience.

Nothing tends more effectually to poiſon morality in its ſource in the minds of youth, than the practice of holding one language, and laying down one ſet of precepts, for the obſervation of the young, and another of the adult. You fall into this error if, for inſtance, you require your children to go to church and neglect going yourſelf, if you teach them to ſay their prayers as a badge of their tender years, if they find that there are certain books which they may not read, and certain converſations they may not hear.

The uſual mode of treating young perſons, will often be found to ſuggeſt to children of ardent fancy and inquiſitive remark, a queſtion, a ſort of floating and undefined reverie, as to whether the whole ſcene of things played before them be not a deluſion, and whether, in ſpite of contrary appearances, they are not a ſpecies of priſoners, upon whom their keepers have formed ſome malignant deſign, which has never yet been properly brought to light. The line which

is ordinarily drawn between men and children is ſo forcible, that they ſeem to themſelves more like birds kept in a cage, or ſheep in a pen, than like beings of the ſame nature. They ſee what is at preſent going on reſpecting them; but they cannot ſee what it means, or in what it is intended to terminate.

Rouſſeau, to whom the world is ſo deeply indebted for the irreſiſtible energy of his writings, and the magnitude and originality of his ſpeculations, has fallen into the common error in the point we are conſidering. His whole ſyſtem of education is a ſeries of tricks, a puppet-ſhow exhibition, of which the maſter holds the wires, and the ſcholar is never to ſuſpect in what manner they are moved. The ſcholar is never to imagine that his inſtructor is wiſer than himſelf. They are to be companions; they are to enter upon their ſtudies together; they are to make a ſimilar progreſs; if the inſtructor drop a remark which facilitates their progreſs, it is to ſeem the pure effect of accident. While he is conducting a proceſs of the moſt uncommon philoſophical reſearch, and is watching every change and motion of the machine, he is to ſeem in the utmoſt degree frank, ſimple, ignorant and undefigning.

The treatiſe of Rouſſeau upon education is

probably a work of the higheſt value. It contains a ſeries of moſt important ſpeculations upon the hiſtory and ſtructure of the human mind; and many of his hints and remarks upon the direct topic of education, will be found of ineſtimable value. But in the article here referred to, whatever may be its merit as a vehicle of fundamental truths, as a guide of practice it will be found of the moſt pernicious tendency. The deception he preſcribes would be in hourly danger of diſcovery, and could not fail of being in a confuſed and indiſtinct manner ſuſpected by the pupil; and in all caſes of this ſort a plot diſcovered would be of incalculable miſchief, while a plot rejected could have little tendency to harm.

If we would have our children frank and ſincere in their behaviour, we muſt take care that frankneſs and ſincerity ſhall not be a ſource of evil to them. If there be any juſtice in the reaſonings of a preceding eſſay *, puniſhment would find no ſhare in a truly excellent ſyſtem of education; even angry looks and words of rebuke would be wholly excluded. But upon every ſyſtem it cannot fail to appear in the higheſt degree impolitic and miſchievous, that young

* Eſſay X.

perſons

perſons ſhould have reaſon given them to repent of their ſincerity.

There can be no one thing of higher importance in the education of youth, than the inſpiring them with frankneſs. What ſort of an idea muſt we form to ourſelves of a young perſon, who regards his parent or inſtructor as a ſecret enemy or as an auſtere cenſor, and who is ſolicitous, as much as poſſible, to withdraw all his actions and thoughts from his obſervation? What ſort of education muſt that be, where the thing preſſed by the youth upon his confident with the moſt earneſt importunity is, Do not let my father know any thing about it? It is worthy of obſervation, how early ſome children contract a cunning eye, a look of care and reſerve, and all the hollow and hypocritical tricks and geſtures, by which the perſons who have the care of them are to be deceived and put upon a wrong ſcent.

The child that any reaſonable perſon would wiſh to call his own or chooſe for the object of his attachment, is a child whoſe countenance is open and erect. Upon his front ſit fearleſs confidence and unbroken hilarity. There are no wrinkles in his viſage and no untimely cares. His limbs, free and unfettered, move as his heart prompts him, and with a grace and agility infinitely

infinitely more winning than thoſe of the moſt ſkilful dancer. Upon the ſlighteſt encouragement, he leaps into the arms of every thing that bears a human form. He welcomes his parent returning from a ſhort abſence, with a bounding heart. He is eager to tell the little ſtory of his joys and adventures. There is ſomething in the very ſound of his voice, full, firm, mellow, fraught with life and ſenſibility; at the hearing of which my boſom riſes, and my eyes are lighted up. He ſympathiſes with ſickneſs and ſorrow, not in a jargon purpoſely contrived to cajole the ſufferer, but in a vein of unaffected tenderneſs. When he addreſſes me, it is not with infantine airs and in an undecided ſtyle, but in a manner that ſhows him fearleſs and collected, full of good ſenſe, of prompt judgment, and appropriate phraſeology. All his actions have a meaning; he combines the guileleſſneſs of undeſigning innocence with the manlineſs of maturer years.

It is not neceſſary to contraſt this character with that of a child of an oppoſite deſcription, to demonſtrate its excellence. With how ill a grace do cares and policy ſit upon the countenance of an infant? How mortifying a ſpectacle, to obſerve his coldneſs, his timidity, the falſeneſs of his eye and the perfidy of his wiles! It is too much, to drive the newly arrived

ſtranger

ſtranger from human ſociety, to inſpire him with a ſolitary and ſelf-centred ſpirit, and to teach him to fear an enemy, before he has known a friend!

ESSAY XIII.

OF MANLY TREATMENT AND BEHAVIOUR.

IT has ſometimes been a queſtion among thoſe who are accuſtomed to ſpeculate upon the ſubject of education, whether we ſhould endeavour to diminiſh or increaſe the diſtinction between youth and manhood, whether children ſhould be trained to behave like men, or ſhould be encouraged to the exerciſe of manners peculiar to themſelves.

Pertneſs and primneſs are always in ſome degree ridiculous or diſguſting in perſons of infant years. There is a kind of premature manhood which we have ſometimes occaſion to obſerve in young perſons, that is deſtructive of all honeſt and ſpontaneous emotion in its ſubjects. They ſeem as if they were robbed of the chief bleſſing of youth, the foremoſt conſolation of its croſſes and mortifications——a thoughtleſs, bounding gaiety. Their behaviour is forced and artificial. Their temper is unanimating and frigid. They diſcuſs and aſſert, but it is with a borrowed judgment. They pride themſelves in what is eminently

nently their ſhame; that they are mere parrots or echoes to repeat the ſounds formed by another. They are impertinent, poſitive and ſelf-ſufficient. Without any pretenſions to an extraordinary maturity of intellect, they are deſtitute of the modeſty and deſire of information that would become their age. They have neither the graces of youth nor age; and are like forced plants, languid, feeble, and, to any juſt taſte, unworthy of the ſlighteſt approbation.

On the other hand there is a character oppoſite to this, with which it is impoſſible to be greatly delighted. The child is timorous, and baſhful, and terrified at the idea of encountering a ſtranger; or he will accoſt the ſtranger with an infantine jargon, deſtitute alike of diſcrimination and meaning. There are parents, who receive a kind of ſenſual pleaſure from the liſping and half-formed accents of their children; and who will treaſure and re-echo them, for the purpoſe of adding duration to theſe imaginary or ſubordinate charms. Nothing is more common, than to employ a particular dialect to young perſons, which has been handed down from generation to generation, and is ſcarcely inferior in antiquity to the dialect of Milton or Shakeſpear. The children thus educated, underſtand dolls, and cock-horſes, and beating tables, and riding upon ſticks,

ſticks, and every thing but a little common ſenſe. This infancy of ſoul is but ſlightly diſguſting at firſt; but, as it grows up with growing ſtature, becomes glaringly unſuitable and abſurd. There are children, who ſeem as if it were intended that they ſhould always remain children, or at leaſt make no proportionable advances towards manhood. They know nothing of the concerns of men, the ſtate of man, or the reaſonings of man. They are totally incapable of all ſound and reſpectable judgment; and you might as well talk to your horſe as to them, of any thing that required the genuine exerciſe of human faculties.

It is deſirable that a child ſhould partake of both characters, the child and the man. The hilarity of youth is too valuable a benefit, for any reaſonable man to wiſh to ſee it driven out of the world. Nor is it merely valuable for the immediate pleaſure that attends it; it is alſo highly conducive to health, to the beſt and moſt deſirable ſtate both of body and mind. Much of it would be cultivated by adults, which is now neglected; and would be even preſerved to old age; were it not for falſe ideas of decorum, a ſpecies of hypocriſy, a ſuperſubtle attention to the ſuppoſed minutiæ of character, that lead us to check our ſpontaneous efforts, and to draw a

veil of gravity over the innocent, as well as the immoderate, luxuriance and wantonneſs of our thoughts.

But, if hilarity be a valuable thing, good ſenſe is perhaps ſtill better. A compariſon has ſometimes been inſtituted between ſerioufneſs and gaiety, and an enquiry ſtarted as to which of the two is moſt excellent. Gaiety has undoubtedly a thouſand recommendations; it is not ſo properly the means of happineſs, as one of the different ſpecies of which happineſs conſiſts. No one would gain attention from a reaſonable man, who ſhould offer to advance a word againſt it. But gaiety muſt probably in the compariſon yield to ſerioufneſs. The world in which we are engaged, is after all a ſerious ſcene. No man can expect long to retain the means of happineſs, if he be not ſometimes ſeriouſly employed in contemplating and combining them. The man of mere gaiety, paſſes away life like a dream, has nothing to recollect, and leaves behind no traces that he was. His ſtate is rather a ſtate of vegetation, each day like the day before, than a ſtate worthy of a rational being. All that is grand and ſublime, in conception or compoſition, in eloquence or in poetry, is ſerious. Nay, gaiety itſelf, if it be ſuch as a delicate taſte would approve, muſt have been indebted for its rearing

and growth to ſerioufneſs. All that is ſublime in character, all that is generouſly virtuous, all that extorts our admiration and makes conqueſt of our moſt ardent affections, muſt have been accompanied both in its riſe and progreſs by ſerioufneſs. A character may be valuable, a man may be contented and happy, without gaiety; but no being can be worthy the name of a man, if ſerioufneſs be not an ingredient in his diſpoſition.

A young perſon ſhould be educated, as if he were one day to become a man. He ſhould not arrive at a certain age, and then all at once be launched upon the world. He ſhould not be either wholly ignorant of, or unexerciſed in, the concerns of men. The world is a momentous and a perilous ſcene. What wiſe parent would wiſh his child to enter it, without preparation, or without being initiated in the ſpectacle of its practices?

The man ſhould, by inceſſant degrees, be grafted upon the youth; the proceſs ſhould perhaps commence from the period of birth. There is no age at which ſomething manly, conſiderate and firm, will not be found graceful. The true point of ſkill is, not to precipitate this important leſſon, but to carry it on with a ſuitable progreſs; to ſhow, to the judicious and well in-

formed ſpectator, always ſomewhat to ſurpriſe, never any thing premature; or rather perhaps to ſhow him a youth, always ſuperior to his years, but yet with ſo graceful and eaſy a ſuperiority, as never to produce any ſenſations, but thoſe of delight.

For this purpoſe, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould check the ſallies of youth. Nothing is of worſe effect in our treatment either of the young or the old, than a continual anxiety, and an ever eager interference with their conduct. Every human being ſhould be permitted, not only from a principle of benevolence, not only from a principle of juſtice, but becauſe without this there can be no true improvement or excellence, to act from himſelf.

But it is more neceſſary that we ſhould tolerate the ſallies of youth, than that we ſhould foſter them. In our own conduct towards them, it is perhaps deſirable that we ſhould always talk to them the language of good ſenſe, and never the jargon of the nurſery; that we ſhould be ſuperior to the folly of adopting and repeating their little blunders; that we ſhould pronounce our words with accuracy and propriety, and not echo their imperfect attempts at pronunciation. In thus conducting ourſelves there is no need of any thing formal or monotonous. We may be

gay; we may be affectionate; our countenance may be dreſſed in ſmiles; we may ſtoop to their capacities; we may adapt ourſelves to the quickneſs and mutability of their tempers. We may do all this; we may win the kindneſs of their hearts; at the ſame time that we are lifting them up to our level, not ſinking ourſelves to theirs.

The whole of this branch of education undoubtedly requires the delicate preſerving of a certain medium. We ſhould reaſon with children, but not to ſuch a degree as to render them parrots or ſophiſts. We ſhould treat them as poſſeſſing a certain importance, but not ſo as to render them fops and coxcombs. We ſhould repoſe in them a certain confidence, and to a certain extent demand their aſſiſtance and advice, but not ſo as to convey a falſhood to their minds, or make them conceive they have accompliſhments which they have not.

In early youth there muſt perhaps be ſome ſubjection of the pupil to the mere will of his ſuperior. But even then the friend need not be altogether loſt in the parent. At a certain age the parental character ſhould perhaps be wholly loſt. There is no ſpectacle that more forcibly extorts the approbation of the human mind, than that of a father and child, already arrived

at years of diſcretion, who live together like brethren. There is no more unequivocal exhibition of imbecility, than the behaviour of a parent who, in his ſon now become a citizen at large, cannot forget the child; and who exerciſes, or attempts to exerciſe, an unſeemly authority over him. The ſtate of equality, which is the conſummation of a juſt education, ſhould for ever be borne in mind. We ſhould always treat our children with ſome deference, and make them in ſome degree the confidents of our affairs and our purpoſes. We ſhould extract from them ſome of the benefits of friendſhip, that they may one day be capable of becoming friends in the utmoſt extent of the term. We ſhould reſpect them, that they may reſpect themſelves. We ſhould behold their proceedings with the eyes of men towards men, that they may learn to feel their portion of importance, and regard their actions as the actions of moral and intelligent beings.

ESSAY

ESSAY XIV.

OF THE OBTAINING OF CONFIDENCE.

THERE is no problem in the ſubject of education more difficult and delicate of ſolution, than that which relates to the gaining the confidence, and exciting the frankneſs of youth.

This is a point perhaps that is never to be accompliſhed by auſterity; and which ſeems frequently to refuſe itſelf to the kindeſt and moſt equitable treatment.

There is an eſſential diſparity between youth and age; and the parent or preceptor is perhaps always an old man to the pupil. Their diſpoſitions and their purſuits are different; their characters, their ſtudies and their amuſements muſt always be conſiderably unlike. This diſparity will probably be found, however paradoxical the aſſertion may appear, to be increaſed in proportion to the frequency of their intercourſe. A parent and a preceptor have of all human beings the leaſt reſemblance to children. Convert one young perſon into a ſort of ſuperintendent and director to his junior, and you

will ſee him immediately ſtart up into a ſpecies of formaliſt and pedant. He is watching the conduct of another; that other has no ſuch employment. He is immerſed in foreſight and care; the other is jocund and careleſs, and has no thought of tomorrow. But what is moſt material, he grows hourly more eſtranged to the liberal ſentiments of equality, and inevitably contracts ſome of the vices that diſtinguiſh the maſter from the ſlave.

Rouſſeau has endeavoured to ſurmount this difficulty by the introduction of a fictitious equality. It is unneceſſary perhaps to ſay more of his ſyſtem upon the preſent occaſion, than that it is a ſyſtem of inceſſant hypocriſy and lying.

The end propoſed in the problem we are examining is of ineſtimable importance.

How ſhall I form the mind of a young perſon unleſs I am acquainted with it? How ſhall I ſuperintend his ideas, and mould his very ſoul, if there be a thouſand things continually paſſing there, of which I am ignorant? The firſt point that a ſkilful artificer would ſtudy, is the power of his tools, and the nature of his materials. Without a conſiderable degree of knowledge in this reſpect, nothing will be produced but abortive attempts, and ſpecimens that diſgrace the operator.

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The thoughts which a young perſon ſpecially regards as his perſonal property, are commonly the very thoughts that he cheriſhes with the greateſt affection. The formal leſſons of education paſs over without ruffling a fibre of his heart; but his private contemplations cauſe his heart to leap, and his blood to boil. When he returns to them, he becomes a new creature. He caſts the ſlough of ſedentary confinement; he reſumes that elaſticity of limb which his fetters had ſuſpended. His eye ſparkles; he bounds over the ſod, as the young roe upon the mountains. His moments of reſtraint being gone, the boy becomes himſelf again.

The thoughts of childhood indeed, though to childhood they are intereſting, are in themſelves idle and of ſmall account. But the period advances, in which the caſe is extremely altered. As puberty approaches, the turn which the mind of a young perſon ſhall then take, may have the moſt important effects upon his whole character. When his heart beats with a conſciouſneſs that he is ſomewhat, he knows not what; when the impatient ſoul ſpurns at that conſtraint, to which before it ſubmitted without a murmur; when a new exiſtence ſeems to deſcend upon him, and to double all that he was before; who then ſhall watch his thoughts and guide his actions?

Happy

Happy for him, if this development of his nature is proportioned to the growth of his frame, and not forced on prematurely by ſome injurious aſſociate. This is a time when he is indeed in want of a pilot. He is now amidſt ſhoals and quickſands, ſurrounded with dangers, on every ſide, and of denominations in the utmoſt degree varied. Yet this is a time when of all others he ſhuns the confidence of his ſuperiors. If he were before in the utmoſt degree open and unreſerved, and his thoughts always flowed unadulterated to his tongue, yet now ſhame ſuſpends the communication, and he dares not commit his unfledged notions to the hearing of a monitor. He lights as a confident, upon a perſon, not leſs young, ignorant and inexperienced than himſelf; or, as it too frequently happens, his confident is of an imagination already debauched and depraved, who, inſtead of leading him with ſafety through untried fields, perpetually ſtimulates and conducts him to meaſures the moſt unfortunate.

It has ſometimes been queſtioned whether ſuch a confidence as is here alluded to, ought to be ſought by the parent or preceptor, and whether the receiving it will not involve him in difficulties and uncertainties from which the wiſeſt moraliſt cannot afterwards extricate himſelf,

ſelf, without injury to the pupil, and diſgrace to himſelf. But ſurely it cannot reaſonably be doubted that, where the pupil ſtands moſt in need of a wiſdom greater than his own, it ſhould be placed within his reach; and that there muſt, in the nature of things, be a conduct fitter than any other to be obſerved by the pupil under theſe circumſtances, which inveſtigation can aſcertain, and to which the perſons who undertake his education may with propriety guide him. To commit the events of the moſt important period of his life to accident, becauſe we have not yet been wiſe enough to determine what they ſhould be, may be the part of ſelfiſh policy preferring to all other concerns the artifice of its own reputation, but cannot be the part of enlightened affection and liberal philanthropy.

There is another reaſon beſide that of the advantage to be derived from the aſſiſtance of ſuperior age and experience, why the parent or preceptor ſhould deſire the confidence of the pupil. If I deſire to do much towards cultivating the mind of another, it is neceſſary that there ſhould exiſt between us a more than common portion of cordiality and affection. There is no power that has a more extenſive operation in the hiſtory of the human mind, than ſympathy. It is one of the characteriſtics of our nature, that we incline

to

to weep with thoſe that weep, and to rejoice with thoſe that rejoice. But, if this be the caſe in our intercourſe with an abſolute ſtranger, it is unſpeakably increaſed in proportion to the greatneſs of our eſteem, and the ſtrength of our attachment. Society in any undertaking, lightens all its difficulties, and beguiles us of all our wearineſs. When my friend accompanies me in my taſk, and our ſouls mutually catch and emit animation, I can perform labours that are almoſt more than human with an undoubting ſpirit. Where ſympathy is ſtrong, imitation eaſily engraſts itſelf. Perſons who are filled with kindneſs towards each other, underſtand each other without aſking the aid of voice and words. There is, as it were, a magnetical virtue that fills the ſpace between them: the communication is palpable, the means of communication too ſubtle and minute to be detected.

If any man deſire to poſſeſs himſelf of the moſt powerful engine that can be applied to the purpoſes of education, if he would find the ground upon which he muſt ſtand to enable himſelf to move the whole ſubſtance of the mind, he will probably find it in ſympathy. Great power is not neceſſarily a ſubject of abuſe. A wiſe preceptor would probably deſire to be in poſſeſſion of great power over the mind of his pupil, though

though he would uſe it with economy and diffidence. He would therefore ſeek by all honeſt arts to be admitted into his confidence, that ſo the points of contact between them may be more extenſively multiplied, that he may not be regarded by the pupil as a ſtranger of the outer court of the temple, but that his image may mix itſelf with his pleaſures, and be made the companion of his recreations.

The road that a ſound underſtanding would point out to us, as leading moſt directly to the confidence of another, is, that we ſhould make ourſelves as much as poſſible his equals, that our affection towards him ſhould diſplay itſelf in the moſt unambiguous colours, that we ſhould diſcover a genuine ſympathy in his joys and his ſorrows, that we ſhould not play the part of the harſh monitor and auſtere cenſor, that we ſhould aſſume no artificial manners, that we ſhould talk in no ſolemn, prolix and unfeeling jargon, that our words ſhould be ſpontaneous, our actions ſimple, and our countenance the mirror to our hearts. Thus conducting ourſelves, thus bland and inſinuating with no treacherous deſign, we ſhall not probably meet a repulſe in our well choſen endeavours to be admitted the confidents of youth. Habit will tend to eſtabliſh us in the poſt we have obtained; our aſcendancy will

every

every day become confirmed; and it is not probable that we ſhall loſe this moſt diſtinguiſhing badge of friendſhip, unleſs through our own miſconduct and folly.

The whole however of this branch of education is a point of the extremeſt delicacy. There is no medium ſo difficult to hit, as that between a diſtempered vigilance and an unſuſpecting ſecurity. By falling into the latter it continually happens that parents and thoſe who undertake the guidance of youth, remain ſatisfied that the perſons under their care have no reſerves with them, at the very time that they invent a thouſand ſtratagems to elude their obſervation. Nothing can exceed the ludicrous effect of this arrogant confidence on the part of the ſenior, if we except the baſeneſs and degradation which are thus, by his miſconduct, perpetually inculcated upon and cultivated in the minds of youth.

In the mean time, it is ſo apparent that to obtain the voluntary confidence of a young perſon is a point of the greateſt difficulty, that the preceptor ought probably to prepare his mind for the event of a failure, and to aſcertain to himſelf the benefits that may be derived from the other advantages of education, when this is denied. So frail is man, ſo imperfect are his wiſeſt

wiſeſt deſigns, and ſo eaſily are we made the dupes of a love of power, that the moſt ſkilful inſtructor may often be expected to fail, in this moſt arduous of problems, this opprobrium of the art of education. It were better that he ſhould not attempt it, than that he ſhould attempt it by illiberal and forbidden means. If he cannot be the choſen confident, he may at leaſt refrain from acting the ſpy or inquiſitor upon his pupil. Let him not extort, what he cannot frankly and generouſly win. Let him not lie in wait to ſurpriſe from the pupil, what the pupil will not conſent to give. Let him not ſo far debaſe the integrity of man, as to play the thief and the eaves-dropper. One of the moſt ſacred principles in ſocial life, is honour, the forbearance that man is entitled to claim from man, that a man of worth would as ſoon ſteal my purſe or forge a title-deed to my eſtate, as read the letter he ſees lying upon my table. One of the greateſt errors of education, is that children are not treated enough like men, that they are not ſupported with ſufficient care in the empire of their little peculium, that they are not made to feel their importance and to venerate themſelves.

There is much that the preceptor may do for the improvement and advantage of his pupil without

without becoming his confident. He may communicate to him from day to day the moſt valuable leſſons. He may form his mind to the moſt liberal ſentiments. He may breathe into him the philanthropy of a Feneſon and the elevated ſoul of a Cato. If he be a man of merit, and duly conſcious of his merit, he will not fear that he can miſcarry in an attempt to excite the ſympathy of his pupil. He will defy him to withhold that ſympathy. He will diſmiſs with generous careleſſneſs the queſtion of an entire confidence and the communication of little cares and little projects. His hold upon the youthful mind will be of a higher and more deciſive denomination. It would be ſtrange indeed, if any one who was initiated in the true ſcience of the human mind, did not know how to wake the ſprings of the ſoul of an infant. And, while the pupil is continually ſubject to the moſt auſpicious influences in all that is moſt eſſential to human welfare, while his mind is impregnated with the moſt generous ſentiments and the pureſt virtues, it may well be believed that, in incidental and inferior points, he will not diſgrace the principles by which he has been formed.

ESSAY

ESSAY XV.

OF CHOICE IN READING.

A DIFFICULTY which frequently preſents itſelf in the private and domeſtic intercourſe of parent and child, is that of determining what books it is proper that children ſhould read, and what books they ſhould not read.

It frequently happens that there are books read by the parent, which are conceived improper for the child. A collection of books, it may be, is viewed through glaſs doors, their outſides and labels are viſible to the child; but the key is carefully kept, and a ſingle book only at a time, ſelected by the parent, is put into his hands. A daughter is prohibited from the reading of novels; and in this prohibition will often commence a trial of ſkill, of quick conveyance on the part of the child, and of ſuſpicious vigilance on the part of the parent.

Ought children to be thus reſtrained? Is it our duty to digeſt for our offspring, as the church of Rome has been accuſtomed to digeſt for her weaker members, an *Index Expurgatorius*,

a catalogue of thoſe books in the reading of which they may be permitted to indulge themſelves?

Various are the miſchiefs that inevitably flow out of ſuch a precaution.

Firſt, a wall of ſeparation is thus erected between children and adults. They are made priſoners, and ſubjected to certain arbitrary regulations; and we are conſtituted their jailors. All generous reciprocity is deſtroyed between the two parties. I cannot ardently love a perſon who is continually warning me not to enter his premiſes, who plants a hedge about my path, and thwarts me in the impulſes of my heart. I cannot underſtand the reaſons that dictate his judgments; it is well if he underſtand them himſelf. I cannot therefore regard him as my friend. Friendſhip requires that the man in whoſe boſom it reigns, ſhould act, and appear to act, for the intereſt of the object of his friendſhip. It is eſſentially hoſtile to all myſtery. What I do not underſtand, cannot excite my affections. The man who ſhuts againſt me the ſecrets of his heart, cannot be unreſervedly beloved by me. Friendſhip requires that the hearts of the perſons ſhould, as it were, be amalgamated into one ſubſtance, that their thoughts ſhould be tranſparent to each other, and their communications entire.

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This perhaps can never be effected in its utmoſt extent. But it is of the moſt unfavourable effect, where the diviſion and reſerve pertinaciouſly force themſelves upon obſervation.

Secondly, the deſpotiſm which is thus exerciſed, is peculiarly grating to a mind of generoſity and ſpirit. Curioſity is one of the ſtrongeſt impulſes of the human heart. To curioſity it is peculiarly incident, to grow and expand itſelf under difficulties and oppoſition. The greater are the obſtacles to its being gratified, the more it ſeems to ſwell, and labour to burſt the mounds that confine it. Many an object is paſſed by with indifference, till it is rendered a ſubject of prohibition, and then it ſtarts up into a ſource of inextinguiſhable paſſion. It may be alleged, that "this uneaſineſs and impatience in a young perſon are capable of being corrected." But is this any thing more than ſaying in other words, that the fineſt ſprings of the human mind may be broken, and the whole reduced to a chaos of diſhonourable lumber? As long as the fiery grandeur of the ſoul remains, that will not be controled, and cannot be moulded by the frigid dictates of another's will, the kind of prohibitions here ſpoken of, will be felt with exquiſite indignation, and, though involuntarily, will be regiſtered as examples of a galling injuſtice.

Thirdly, the trial of ſkill thus inſtituted between the parent and child, is of the moſt pernicious tendency. The child is employed in doing that, in which it is his endeavour not to be detected. He muſt liſten with anxious attention, leſt he ſhould be burſt in upon before he is aware. He muſt break off his reading, and hide his book, a thouſand times upon a falſe alarm. At length, when the interruption really occurs, he muſt rouſe his attention, and compoſe his features. He impoſes imperious ſilence upon the flutterings of his heart; he pitches to the true key of falſhood the tone of his voice; the object of his moſt anxious effort, is to appear the thing that he is not. It is not poſſible to imagine a ſchool of more refined hypocriſy.

The great argument in favour of this project of an *Index Expurgatorius*, is derived from the various degrees of moral or immoral tendency that is to be found in literary compoſitions.

One of the moſt obvious remarks that offer themſelves under this head, is, that authors themſelves are continually falling into the groſſeſt miſtakes in this reſpect, and ſhow themſelves ſuperlatively ignorant of the tendency of their own writings. Nothing is more futile, than the formal and regular moral frequently annexed to Eſop's fables of animals. Examine the fable impartially, and you will find that

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the leſſon ſet down at foot of it, is one of the laſt inferences that would have occurred to you. It is in a very different temper that the book-maker ſqueezes out what he calls his Uſe, from that in which the reader becomes acquainted with the circumſtances of the fable.

To aſcertain the moral of a ſtory, or the genuine tendency of a book, is a ſcience peculiarly abſtruſe. As many controverſies might be raiſed upon ſome queſtions of this ſort, as about the number ſix hundred and ſixty ſix in the book of Revelations.

What is the tendency of Homer's Iliad? The author ſeems to have deſigned it, as an example of the fatal conſequences of diſcord among political allies. One of the effects it appears moſt conſpicuouſly to have produced, is that of enhancing the falſe luſtre of military atchievements, and perpetuating the noxious race of heroes in the world.

What is the tendency of Gulliver's Travels, particularly of that part which relates to the Houyhnmhns and Yahoos? It has frequently been affirmed to be, to inſpire us with a loathing averſion to our ſpecies, and fill us with a frantic preference for the ſociety of any claſs of animals, rather than of men. A poet of our own day [Hayley*], as a ſuitable remuneration for the

* Triumphs of Temper.

production of ſuch a work, has placed the author in hell, and conſigned him to the eternal torment of devils. On the other hand it has been doubted whether, under the name of Houyhnmhns and Yahoos, Swift has done any thing more than exhibit two different deſcriptions of men, in their higheſt improvement and loweſt degradation; and it has been affirmed that no book breathes more ſtrongly a generous indignation againſt vice, and an ardent love of every thing that is excellent and honourable to the human heart.

There is no end to an enumeration of controverſies of this ſort. Authors themſelves are no more infallible in this reſpect, than the men who read them. If the moral be invented firſt, the author did not then know where the brilliant lights of his ſtory would fall, nor of conſequence where its principal power of attraction would be found. If it be extracted afterwards, he is often taken at a diſadvantage, and muſt extricate himſelf as he can.

Otway ſeems to have purſued the laſt method. The moral to his tragedy of the Orphan is thus expreſſed:

'Tis thus that heav'n its empire does maintain;
It may afflict; but man muſt not complain.

Richardſon purſued the oppoſite method. He has drawn in Lovelace and Grandiſon models

dels of a debauched and of an elevated character. Neither of them is eminently calculated to produce imitation; but it would not perhaps be adventurous to affirm that more readers have wiſhed to reſemble Lovelace, than have wiſhed to reſemble Grandiſon.

Milton has written a ſublime poem upon a ridiculous ſtory of eating an apple, and of the eternal vengeance decreed by the Almighty againſt the whole human race, becauſe their progenitor was guilty of this black and deteſtable offence. The object of his poem, as he tells us, was

To juſtify the ways of God to men. B. I, ver. 26.

But one of the moſt memorable remarks that ſuggeſt themſelves under this branch of the ſubject, is, that the true moral and fair inference from a compoſition has often lain concealed for ages from its moſt diligent readers. Books have been handed down from generation to generation, as the true teachers of piety and the love of God, that repreſent him as ſo mercileſs and tyrannical a deſpot, that, if they were conſidered otherwiſe than through the medium of prejudice, they could inſpire nothing but hatred. It ſeems that the impreſſion we derive from a book, depends much leſs upon its real contents, than upon the temper of mind and preparation with which we read it.

An inſtance of this kind, that perhaps deſerves to be mentioned, may be adduced from a ſtrain of pious gratitude and exultation in Dr. Watts's Divine Songs for Children.

> *'Not more than others* I deſerve,
> *Yet* God has given me more:
> For I have food; while others *ſtarve*
> *And beg from door to door!*

Thus far we have conſidered moral and tendency as if they were two names for the ſame thing. This is however by no means the caſe.

The moral of any work may be defined to be, that ethical ſentence to the illuſtration of which the work may moſt aptly be applied. The tendency is the actual effect it is calculated to produce upon the reader, and cannot be completely aſcertained but by the experiment. The ſelection of the one, and the character of the other, will in a great degree depend upon the previous ſtate of mind of the reader.

Let the example be the tragedy of the Fair Penitent. The moral deduced from this admirable poem by one ſet of readers will be, the miſchievous tendency of unlawful love, and the duty incumbent upon the ſofter ſex to devote themſelves in all things to the will of their fathers and huſbands. Other readers may perhaps regard it as a powerful ſatire upon the inſtitutions

inſtitutions at preſent exiſting in ſociety relative to the female ſex, and the wretched conſequences of that mode of thinking, by means of which, in a woman "one falſe ſtep entirely damns her fame." They will regard Caliſta as a ſublime example of a woman of the moſt glorious qualities, ſtruggling againſt the injuſtice of mankind;—capable, by the greatneſs of her powers, and the heroiſm of her temper, of every thing that is excellent; contending with unconquerable fortitude againſt an accumulation of evils; conquered, yet not in ſpirit; hurried into the baſeſt actions, yet with a ſoul congenial to the nobleſt. It is of no conſequence whether the moral contemplated by the author, were different from both of theſe. The tendency again may be diſtinct from them all, and will be various according to the various tempers and habits of the perſons by whom the work is conſidered.

From the diſtinctions here laid down it ſeems to follow, that the moral of a work is a point of very ſubordinate conſideration, and that the only thing worthy of much attention is the tendency. It appears not unlikely that, in ſome caſes, a work may be fairly ſuſceptible of no moral inference, or none but a bad one, and yet may have a tendency in a high degree ſalutary and advantageous. The principal tendency

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of a work, to make uſe of a well known diſtinction, may be either intellectual or moral, to increaſe the powers of the underſtanding, or to mend the diſpoſition of the heart. Theſe conſiderations are probably calculated to moderate our cenſures, againſt many of the authors whoſe morality we are accuſtomed to arraign. A bad moral to a work, is a very equivocal proof of a bad tendency. To aſcertain the tendency of any work is a point of great difficulty. The moſt that the moſt perfect wiſdom can do, is to ſecure the benefit of the majority of readers. It is by no means impoſſible, that the books moſt pernicious in their effects that ever were produced, were written with intentions uncommonly elevated and pure.

The intellectual tendency of any book is perhaps a conſideration of much greater importance, than its direct moral tendency. Gilblas is a book not very pure in its moral tendency; its ſubject is the ſucceſſes and good fortune of a kind of ſharper, at leaſt, of a man not much fettered and burthened with the ſtrictneſs of his principles; its ſcenes are a tiſſue of knavery and profligacy, touched with a light and exquiſite pencil. Shakeſpear is a writer by no means anxious about his moral. He ſeems almoſt indifferent concerning virtue and vice, and takes up with either as it falls in his way. It would

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be an inſtructive enquiry to conſider what ſort of devaſtation we ſhould commit in our libraries, if we were to pronounce upon the volumes by their moral, or even by their direct moral tendency. Hundreds of thoſe works that have been the adoration of ages, upon which the man of genius and taſte feeds with an uncloyed appetite, from which he derives ſenſe, and power, and diſcernment, and refinement, and activity, and vigour, would be conſigned to the flames for their tranſgreſſions, or to the lumber-room for their neutrality. While our choiceſt favours and our firſt attention would often be beſtowed upon authors, who have no other characteriſtic attribute but that of the torpedo, and the principal tendency of whoſe literature is to drive all literature and talent out of the world.

If we ſuffer our minds to dwell upon the comparative merit of authors, if we free ourſelves from the prejudices of the nurſery, and examine the queſtion in the liberal ſpirit of ſcholars and philoſophers, we ſhall not long heſitate where to beſtow our loudeſt approbation. The principal praiſe is certainly due to thoſe authors, who have a talent to "create a ſoul under the ribs of death*;" whoſe compoſition is fraught with irreſiſtible enchantment; who pour their whole

* Milton.

ſouls

ſouls into mine, and raiſe me as it were to the ſeventh heaven; who furniſh me with "food for contemplation even to madneſs *;" who raiſe my ambition, expand my faculties, invigorate my reſolutions, and ſeem to double my exiſtence. For authors of this ſort I am provided with an ample licence; and, ſo they confer upon me benefits thus ineſtimable and divine, I will never contend with them about the choice of their vehicle, or the incidental accompaniments of their gift. I can gueſs very nearly what I ſhould have been, if Epictetus had not bequeathed to us his Morals, or Seneca his Conſolations. But I cannot tell what I ſhould have been, if Shakeſpear or Milton had not written. The pooreſt peaſant in the remoteſt corner of England, is probably a different man from what he would have been but for theſe authors. Every man who is changed from what he was by the peruſal of their works, communicates a portion of the inſpiration all around him. It paſſes from man to man, till it influences the whole maſs. I cannot tell that the wiſeſt mandarin now living in China, is not indebted for part of his energy and ſagacity to the writings of Milton and Shakeſpear, even though it ſhould happen that he never heard of their names.

* Rowe.

Books

Books will perhaps be found, in a leſs degree than is commonly imagined, the corruptors of the morals of mankind. They form an effective ſubſidiary to events and the contagion of vicious ſociety; but, taken by themſelves, they rarely produce vice and profligacy where virtue exiſted before. Every thing depends upon the ſpirit in which they are read. He that would extract poiſon from them, muſt for the moſt part come to them with a mind already debauched. The power of books in generating virtue, is probably much greater than in generating vice. Virtue is an object that we contemplate with a mind at peace with itſelf. The more we contemplate it, the more we find our fortitude increaſe, enabling us to contend with obſtacles, and even to encounter contempt. But vice is an object of a peculiarly unfavourable ſort. The thought of entering into a vicious courſe, is attended with uneaſineſs, timidity and ſhame; it diſarms, ſtill more ſtrongly than it excites us; and our reluctance to a life of profligacy can ſcarcely be overcome but by the ſtimulus of bold and impudent ſociety.

Another obſervation of conſiderable importance in deciding on the ſubject we are here examining, relates to an error that too often pervades the whole courſe of an attentive and affectionate education. The regard of a parent to his

his child will frequently riſe to the moſt extravagant height. He conſiders him as a prodigy. He thinks no labour too great to be expended on him. He ſcarcely ſuffers the idea of him at any time to eſcape from his recollection. He regards him with the fondneſs of an enthuſiaſtic lover for his miſtreſs; and treats him as the child himſelf would treat ſome precious toy, which he will not ſuffer to be put out of his ſight. He protects him with as much anxiety, as if a rude ſhock would daſh him to pieces, or a rough blaſt wither the very eſſence of his frame.

This is eſſentially wrong. The true end of human exiſtence, is not to ſerve as a toy and amuſement to another. Man can never appear in his genuine dignity, but ſo far as he is capable of ſtanding alone. A child is not to be reared as that precious thing, that no wind may blow, and no ſun may ſcorch. Let us never forget that our child is a being of the ſame nature with ourſelves; born to have paſſions and thoughts and ſentiments of his own; born to fill a ſtation, and act a part; with difficulties that he ought to ſurmount, and duties that he is bound to diſcharge.

Such is the genuine vocation of man. In the remembrance of this vocation he ought to be bred. The man ought to deſcend upon the child

by inſenſible degrees, till his whole boſom ſwells with the generous freight, He ſhould begin to ſtand by himſelf, and reſpect his own dignity, as ſoon as he is able to utter an articulate ſound.

For this purpoſe there is always a portion of confidence which it is our duty to repoſe in him. He ſhould neither be bred apart from the world, nor in ignorance of what paſſes in the world. He ſhould be accuſtomed to behold the faces of his ſpecies. He ſhould know ſomething of the ſtory of their paſſions, their ſingularities, and even of their vices. He ſhould be ſuffered to ſtand where their inclinations may ſometimes interfere and joſtle with his. It is much to be feared, if we breed him in indolent effeminacy to a certain age, that his whole life will bear the marks of it. The human mind is never ſo ductile and pliant as in early youth. Whatever therefore we ſhould wiſh to find it at years of maturity, we ſhould endeavour to begin in it at the tendereſt years.

Theſe remarks are obviouſly applicable to the ſubject of choice in reading. As, relative to the queſtion of ſocial intercourſe, the child ſhould early begin in ſome degree to live in the world, that is, with his ſpecies; ſo ſhould he do as to the books he is to read. It is not good, that

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he ſhould be ſhut up for ever in imaginary ſcenes, and that, familiar with the apothegms of philoſophers, and the maxims of ſcientifical and elevated morality, he ſhould be wholly ignorant of the perverſeneſs of the human heart, and the ſprings that regulate the conduct of mankind. Truſt him in a certain degree with himſelf. Suffer him in ſome inſtances to ſelect his own courſe of reading. There is danger that there ſhould be ſomething too ſtudied and monotonous in the ſelection we ſhould make for him. Suffer him to wander in the wilds of literature. There is a principle in the human mind by which a man ſeems to know his own time, and it will ſometimes be much better that he ſhould engage in the peruſal of books at the period of his own choice, than at the time that you may recollect to put them in his hands. Man is a creature that loves to act from himſelf; and actions performed in this way, have infinitely more of ſound health and vigour in them, than the actions to which he is prompted by a will foreign to his own.

There is only one further remark to be added on this ſubject. It has already been ſhown that the impreſſion we derive from a book, depends much leſs upon its real contents, than upon the temper of mind and preparation with which we

read it. Hence it ſhould ſeem to follow that a ſkilful preceptor need be under little apprehenſion reſpecting the books which his pupil ſhould ſelect for his peruſal. In this ſenſe a celebrated maxim of the apoſtle Paul may be admitted for true, To the pure all things are pure. Nothing is more common than to ſee a man who labours under certain prepoſſeſſions, exclaiming upon the moſt demonſtrative arguments as flimſy and ſuperficial, and reading the moſt incoherent and ridiculous rhapſodies with unmingled reverence. This however is not always to be truſted to. Truth is powerful, and, if not inſtantly, at leaſt by ſlow degrees, may make good her poſſeſſion. Gleams of good ſenſe may penetrate through the thickeſt clouds of error. But we are ſuppoſing in the preſent caſe that truth is the object of the preceptor. Upon that aſſumption it would be ſtrange indeed, if he were not able to triumph over corruption and ſophiſtry, with the advantage of being continually at hand, of watching * every change and ſymptom as they may ariſe, and

* No reader perhaps can need to be reminded of the difference between this watchfulneſs, and the diſingenuous vigilance ſpoken of in page 127. A philoſophical perſpicacity is highly beneficial, but not that ſort of obſervingneſs which is ſo ſenſitive as to ſubvert our tranquillity, or ſo unſcrupulous as to blaſt our honour.

more especially with the advantage of real voice, of accommodated eloquence, and of living sympathies, over a dead letter. These advantages are sufficient; and, as the true object of education is not to render the pupil the mere copy of his preceptor, it is rather to be rejoiced in, than lamented, that various reading should lead him into new trains of thinking; open to him new mines of science and new incentives to virtue; and perhaps, by a blended and compound effect, produce in him an improvement which was out of the limits of his lessons, and raise him to heights the preceptor never knew.

ESSAY

ESSAY XVI.

OF EARLY INDICATIONS OF CHARACTER.

A FEW remarks will not perhaps be unprofitably ſet down, on the ſubject of juvenile character, and the promiſing and unpromiſing indications that early diſplay themſelves in the manners of youth.

Calumny has long been privileged to ſtalk the world at large, and to ſhed its poiſon upon the faireſt flowers. It can ſhow a very ancient title, and will not eaſily ſuffer ejectment. Secret reſentment often delights to add new malignity to its venom; and often a mere gaiety of humour, ſporting in thoughtleſs ſallies, will fix a ſting that neither time, nor all the healing arts of wiſdom and virtue, ſhall be able to cure. The wound rankles unſeen. The grandeſt efforts of genius, and the pureſt energies of benevolence, thus become enfeebled, diſcouraged, annihilated. Nothing more eaſy than to barb the ſlander; nothing more difficult than to extract the dart. The whole appearance of the man becomes diſcoloured and disfigured; all his virtues are

transformed into vices; all his actions are misrepreſented, miſunderſtood and vilified. It matters not with how much generoſity he ſets himſelf to act: the glaſs of truth ſhall never be turned on him; nor ſhall he in any inſtance obtain juſtice.

But calumny is doubly execrable and unmanly, when it attacks the firſt promiſing dawnings of youth. A man ſufficiently adult, has attained ſome ſtrength, and can cope with it. He can plead his own cauſe. He has tried the paſſions of men, and the magic of undaunted truth; and uſes both, as tools with the powers of which he is acquainted. Beſide, a man muſt expect ſome time or other to encounter adverſity: if he be hardly preſſed upon, and unjuſtly dealt with, his caſe is indeed worthy of regret; but it is the lot of man, and the condition under which he was born. It is worſe than this, when a weak and defenceleſs youth is made the butt of theſe attacks. It is more worthy of regret, when he is refuſed the common period of probation; is maimed and diſmounted at the very entrance of the courſe; and ſent to languiſh long years of a baffled exiſtence, with his limbs already withered and ſhrunk up by the ſhocks of calumny. That men ſhould be condemned unjuſtly, is that which ought not to be; that they ſhould be condemned

demned untried, and not for what they have done, but for what we preſume to foretel they will do, is an aggravation of the calamity.

The argument againſt calumny however has been carried too far. It is an erroneous ſyſtem of morality which would teach us, that we judge not, leſt we ſhould be judged, and that we ſpeak evil of no man. Falſhood is vice, whether it be uttered to a man's commendation or cenſure; and to ſuppreſs that which is true, is to be regarded as a ſpecies of falſhood. We ought not to deſire for ourſelves, not to be judged, but that we may not be judged unjuſtly; and the like equal meaſure we ought to deal to others. I feel no exultation in that man's applauſe, who is not alſo endowed with a republican boldneſs to cenſure. Frankneſs is perhaps the firſt of virtues; or, at leaſt, is that without which virtue of a manly and liberal dimenſion cannot exiſt. To give to our thoughts their genuine and appropriate language, is one of the moſt wholſome exerciſes in which we can be engaged. Without this exerciſe it is ſcarcely poſſible that we ſhould learn to think with preciſion and correctneſs. It teaches us to review our thoughts; to bluſh for their abſurdity, their groundleſs ſingularities, and their exaggeration. It ripens what at firſt was merely opinion, into ſyſtem and ſcience.

The fault for the moſt part, when we ſpeak of the merits of our neighbour, is not, that we ſay what we think; but that, for want of practice and ſkill, we do not ſay what we think; we do not ſuit our words to the meaſure of our ſentiments; we do not call our minds into operation to compare our opinions with the grounds of our opinions, and our phraſes with both. We communicate to our hearers ſentiments that we do not entertain. We debauch even our own judgments, while we ſpeak; and, inſtead of analyſing, arranging and faſhioning our concluſions as we ought, become impaſſioned by liſtening to the ſound of our own voice, ſubject our matter to our words, not the words to the matter, and talk ourſelves into extravagancies, which we did not think of in the outſet, but which we have not afterwards the courage and candour to retract, either to others or to ourſelves.

What is to be demanded therefore in behalf of the young, is not, that we ſhould refrain from judging them, or fear to utter our judgments; but that we ſhould indefatigably endeavour to form true principles of judgment, that we ſhould allow ourſelves in no haſty concluſions, that, recollecting the mutability of youth, we ſhould be reluctant to paſs a final condemnation, and above all, that we ſhould not, from the force of a jaun-

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diced imagination, convert the little ſtarts, the idle ſallies and the temporary deviations of an unformed mind, into inexpiable errors.

It often happens that irregularities which ought perhaps rather to be regarded as indications of future greatneſs, are converted into ſubjects of pitiful lamentation and odious condolence, when the ſpectator is a man of narrow morals, and of principles of judgment abſurdly frigid and ſevere.

The youth reſpecting whom I ſhould augur moſt favourably, is he, in whom I obſerve ſome uſeleſs luxuriance, and ſome qualities, which terrify, while they delight me. The moſt abundant endowments will one day aſſume a regularity and arrangement, which endowments in the next degree inferior are unable to attain. Sobriety, conſtancy, an awful and wide-ſpreading tranquillity, that might in one point of view be compared with that of the Grand Southern Pacific Ocean, are perhaps in ſome degree the characteriſtics of a mind of the firſt order. It is not ruffled by every puff of air; it holds on its way with a majeſtic courſe; it is ſelf-balanced and ſelf-centred; always great, always worthy, and always ſublime.

But this is not the caſe with a mind, in which as yet the hints and capabilities of greatneſs only

exiſt. A mighty machine, till it is put into order, ſeems only an inexplicable chaos. The limbs and members of which it conſiſts, are ſcattered wide. Every thing is unarranged and rude.

A feeble mind is not greatly liable to exceſs. A powerful mind, when it has not yet eſſayed its powers, and poiſed its wings, is the ſeat, ſometimes of ridiculous, ſometimes of dangerous, irregularities.

A mind, conſcious of its deſtined ſtrength, but which as yet can ſcarcely be called ſtrong, is often preſumptuous, dogmatical, fierce, hard, unkind, tempeſtuous, unduly ſevere in its judgments of character and talent;

> Is ne'er ſo ſure our ardour to create,
> As when it treads the brink of all we hate*.

This propoſition however is by no means to be underſtood univerſally. A young perſon deſtined in the ſequel to diſplay uncommon talents, will often at preſent appear ſingularly amiable. It will be hard, if a young perſon of talents ſhould not be in ſome reſpects amiable. It is a reaſonable ſubject of fear, when the unamiable qualities above enumerated appear with peculiar ſtrength in early youth, that ſome veſ-

* Pope. Theſe are not his exact words.

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tige of them will become eſſentially interwoven with the character, and even attend their poſſeſſor to the grave.

There are ſome admirable traits of character that are almoſt inſeparable from the youth of a perſon, deſtined hereafter to play an illuſtrious part upon the theatre of mankind.

The firſt of theſe is curioſity. His mind may be expected to be inceſſantly at work, purſuing enquiries, accumulating knowledge, obſerving, inveſtigating, combining. His curioſity however may frequently be found to be an obſtinate, ſelf-willed principle, opening veins of its own chooſing, waſting itſelf in oblique, unprofitable ſpeculations, and refuſing to bring its energies to bear upon a purſuit pointed out to it by another.

A ſecond characteriſtic of early genius is candour. Often will a young perſon of uncommon endowments be peremptory, rough, building his concluſions on the moſt unſatisfactory foundations, and aſſerting them with the moſt ungraceful arrogance. But there is a tone of voice and ſentiment which, the moment it reaches his ears, will, as it were by enchantment, recal him to himſelf, and bring forth to view all the honeſt, fearleſs, unreſiſting candour, that till then dwelt, idle and unremarked, in his boſom. To common obſervers however, and in ordinary caſes,

caſes, he will appear the reverſe of candour. There is an imperious tone in the aged and the adult, preſuming on ſlight grounds, dictatorial, peeviſh and impotent, which he will be apt to repel with rude and unbecoming indignation.

A third characteriſtic of early genius is the love of diſtinction. He burns to be ſomebody. He cannot endure to be confounded in the crowd. It is the nature of the human mind never to be ſatisfied with itſelf, except ſo far as it can by ſome means procure to have its own favourable opinion confirmed by the ſuffrage of others. This characteriſtic however, like the preceding ones, will frequently diſappoint the obſerver. The pupil has choſen his own favourite field of diſtinction, and will often be callous to allurements which are to invite him into another. He will perhaps be delicate in his appetite for praiſe. Groſs flattery, and ſtill more the ſpiritleſs and tedious eulogium of ſuperannuated kindneſs, or that is dictated by a left-handed purpoſe of ſtratagem and bribery, will tire his impatience, or excite his diſguſt.

One of the faults which has been too often and too ſeverely cenſured in young perſons, is conceit. This is a fault certainly more incident to a youth with talents, than a youth without. He is like a perſon newly appointed to ſome poſt of honour; he is not yet familiarized to the exerciſe

erciſe of authority or the ſplendour of decoration. This is a fault of all others that demands our forbearance, ſince in the nature of things it is almoſt certain to be temporary. Familiar with diſtinction, he will in no long time learn to wear it with eaſe. A man of talents, from the activity of his mind and his inceſſant ſpirit of obſervation, will neceſſarily compreſs ten times as much experience into a given period, as an ordinary man. Each day in his hiſtory, will furniſh him with a comment on the laſt. He will ſo often have detected his miſtakes, ſo frequently contemned his abſurdities, and will have felt with ſo much anguiſh his miſconduct and diſgraces, that he can ſcarcely fail, when the firſt effervescence of youth is over, to become diffident, ſelf-ſuſpicious and, in the beſt ſenſe of the term, modeſt. One thing further is to be remarked under this head of conceit. The conceit of young perſons, unleſs obſerved with an eye peculiarly candid and diſcerning, will be more than commonly diſguſtful. It is a frigid, ſelfiſh, unchaſtiſed, unpoliſhed ſentiment. As they aſcend to manhood, it will be modified by the better affections and charities of the human heart, its coldneſs will be animated, its aſperities ſubdued, and the ſtiffneſs that fettered it broken

off. An enlightened ſpectator will not fail to take this circumſtance into conſideration.

There is one point, that remains to be diſcuſſed, reſpecting the ſuppoſed unpromiſing indications which diſcover themſelves in the manners of youth, that is of more ſerious importance than any of the preceding. I mean, what relates to the exceſſes of their conduct, and their offences againſt morality.

Too often, by the adult, the anxious parent, and the caſſocked pedant, this ſubject is conſidered with an unpardonable ſeverity. Let it be recollected, that it is the characteriſtic of the ſtrong, and therefore the valuable mind, to mix this ſtrength in its vices, as well as its virtues. It is thus frequently that the moſt ineſtimable leſſons of experience are amaſſed. The impetuoſity of youth muſt have time to ſubſide. Of all the characteriſtics of early life, tameneſs is the characteriſtic of moſt fatal augury. A young man, juſt arrived at years of puberty, will, like a high-bred, well-mettled horſe, champ the bit, and ſpurn the earth, impatient of reſtraint. He will have his period of intoxication. Provided its date be ſhort, it ſeems as if it were ſcarcely to be regretted. The ſeaſon of ſobriety and reflection will take its turn; and, if then a wife,

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a conſiderate and an affectionate friend could lend his aſſiſtance to the genuine operations of the mind, the event would be inexpreſſibly auſpicious.

There is nothing more contrary to true juſtice and enlightened morality, than the unſparing harſhneſs with which the old frequently cenſure the extravagancies of the young. Enamoured of black forebodings, and gorged with miſanthropy, they pour out their ill-omened propheſyings with unpitying cruelty. The ſober, the dull, the obedient, lads that have no will and no underſtanding of their own, are the only themes of their eulogium. They know no touch of candour and liberal juſtice. They make no allowance for the mutability of youth, and have no generous preſentiment of their future recollection and wiſdom. They never forgive a ſingle offence. They judge of characters from one accidental failing, and will not deign to turn their attention to thoſe great and admirable qualities, by which this one failing, it may be, is amply redeemed. They may be compared to that tyrant of antiquity who, intending to convey a ſymbolical leſſon upon the principles of deſpotiſm, paſſed through a field of corn, and ſtruck off every ear that had the audacity to rear its head

head above the dull and inſipid level of its fellows.

In the midſt however of the candid and liberal indulgence which is ſo amply due to juvenile years, we muſt not forget the principles of impartial judgment. It will often be our duty to regret, while we forgive. It too frequently happens that the exceſſes of youth, not only leave an unfavourable ſtain upon the reputation, but that they corrupt the diſpoſition, and debaſe the character. It is not every youthful folly that men ſhake off when they arrive at years of diſcretion. The wild and inconſiderate boy will often entail ſome of the worſt features of his character on the man.

Owing to this it is, that we frequently meet with that mixed character in the adult over which humanity weeps. We have often occaſion to obſerve the moſt admirable talents, and even the moſt excellent diſpoſitions, in men, whoſe talents and virtues are nevertheleſs rendered abortive by ſome habitual indiſcretion. Theſe men a well-formed mind cannot fail to love. Their very weakneſs cauſes a peculiar kind of tenderneſs to mix itſelf with our love. But they go out of the world, having excited its admiration, not added to the ſtock of good; or their

their uſefulneſs, if uſeful they have been, falls infinitely ſhort of that which their great qualities would have enabled them to produce.

Sometimes however the ill conſequence that remains from the impreſſion of youthful follies, is much worſe than this. The talents remain, but the character becomes debauched. The men excite our admiration, but we view their powers with leſs of hope, than terror. The ingenuouſneſs, the ſimplicity of a good heart, are extinguiſhed. They become crafty and deceitful. Poſſeſſed with an unhallowed ſpirit of ambition, the purity and fervour of benevolence in them are loſt. They are launched perhaps upon the ocean of affairs; they mix with the giddy ſcene of faſhion; they are initiated in all the degrading arts, by which extravagance is ſupported, and ſudden fortune is acquired; and they prey upon the unwary and the induſtrious, unleſs opportunity and policy ſhould call them to prey upon the vitals of their country.

THE

THE

ENQUIRER.

PART II.

ESSAY I.

OF RICHES AND POVERTY.

THERE is nothing that deſerves to be more minutely watched, than what may be ſtyled an intemperate ſpirit of philoſophy.

The ſect that carried this ſpirit to the moſt ridiculous extreme among the ancients, were the Stoics.

One of the deciſions of this ſpirit is, that riches are no benefit, and poverty no evil.

If this maxim were true, particularly the latter member, in its utmoſt extent, the chief argument in favour of political reform and amendment would be ſhown to be utterly falſe.

The reverſe of this maxim, it ſhould ſeem, ought to be received. Poverty is an enormous evil. By poverty I underſtand the ſtate of a man poſſeſſing no permanent property, in a country where wealth and luxury have already gained a ſecure eſtabliſhment.

He then that is born to poverty, may be ſaid, under another name, to be born a ſlave.

A boy of a thoughtful and reflecting turn, will frequently look forward in this reſpect to the ſtate of manhood, with an aching heart. Now, he will exclaim, I am maintained by the induſtry of others; I am freed from all ſolicitude about the ſupply of tomorrow. But hereafter I ſhall be told, You ſhall not have the neceſſaries of the day without the labour of the day; "He that will not work, neither ſhall he eat*." His ſtate in ſeveral reſpects reſembles the prophetic denunciation of Jeſus Chriſt to the apoſtle Peter: "Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, When thou waſt young, thou girdedſt thyſelf, and walkedſt whither thou wouldeſt: but when thou ſhalt be old, thou ſhalt ſtretch forth thy hands, and another ſhall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldeſt not†." In reality however, the child and the adult are both ſlaves in different ways: when we put on the manly

* II Theſſ. Chap. iii, ver. 10. † John, Chap. xxi, ver. 18.

gown,

gown, we only change one ſpecies of deſpot for another.

But, it will be aſked, is not the complaint here recited, unreaſonable and unjuſt? Is any man entitled to claim through life, that he ſhould be maintained by the induſtry of others?

Certainly not. The injuſtice I ſuffer, is not in the actual labour, but in the quantity of that labour. If no man were abſolutely compelled to perform a greater ſhare of labour than, multiplied by the number of members in the community, was neceſſary for the ſubſiſtence of the community, he would have no right to complain on that account. But the labour then required, would be diminiſhed to a tenth, perhaps a twentieth part of the labour now impoſed upon the huſbandman and artificer*.

The evil of poverty principally conſiſts of the following particulars: leaving out of the enumeration the frequently experienced inſufficiency of labour to maintain the poor; the uſual accident of men's being thruſt out of their cuſtomary train of induſtry and reſource for bread by the fluctuations of ſociety; and the want of a ſuitable proviſion for ſickneſs, infirmity and age.

* Political Juſtice, Book VIII, Chap. VI, octavo edition.

We will confine ourſelves to points of more univerſal application.

Firſt, the abridgment of life, and privation of the enjoyments of life.

As to the abridgment of life we are ſcarcely competent judges, ſince wealth, expended in ſenſuality and indulgence, is ſcarcely leſs inimical to the protraction of exiſtence. Every one can ſee however, that inordinate labour produces untimely decrepitude. Every one can conceive the varieties of pain and diſeaſe, which accrue from the reſtraint of our limbs, the intemperate exerciſe of the muſcles, and a continual expoſure to the inclemency of the ſeaſons.

That the poor are peculiarly ſubjected to a privation of the enjoyments of life, and obliged to content themſelves for the greater part of their exiſtence with that negative happineſs which conſiſts in the abſence of pain, is a point too evident to need illuſtration.

Secondly, the poor are condemned to a want of that leiſure which is neceſſary for the improvement of the mind. They are the predeſtinated victims of ignorance and prejudice. They are compelled for the moſt part to rank with thoſe creatures, that exiſt only for a few years, and then are as if they had never been. They merely

merely vegetate. The whole of the powers they poſſeſs, is engaged in the purſuit of miſerable expedients to protract their exiſtence. Whatever be the prejudice, the weakneſs or the ſuperſtition of their age and country, they have ſcarcely any chance to eſcape from it. It is melancholy to reflect, how few moments they can have of complacence, of exultation, of honeſt pride, or of joy. Theirs is a neutral exiſtence. They go forward with their heads bowed down to the earth, in a mournful ſtate of inanity and torpor. Yet, like the victims of Circe, they have the underſtanding left ever and anon to afford them a glimpſe of what they might have been. In this reſpect they are more unfortunate than the beaſts.

Thirdly, even thoſe who eſcape from the general ſentence of ignorance, are haunted with the ills of poverty in another ſhape. Leiſure well employed is the moſt invaluable benefit that can fall to the lot of man. If they have had leiſure to accumulate the rudiments of knowledge, they have not the leiſure to conſtruct them. Even if their immediate avocation have ſomething in it analogous to the cultivation of intellect, ſtill they are not carried whither they would, but whither they would not. Wherever almoſt we find the records of talents

and genius, we find a man impelled by accident, hurried by neceſſity, and the nobleſt conceptions of his mind rendered abortive by the ills of fortune. There is no plant that requires to be ſo aſſiduouſly tended, and ſo much favoured by every incidental and ſubordinate circumſtance, as the effuſions of fancy, and the diſcoveries of ſcience.

While ſuch appear to me the genuine effects of poverty, never will I inſult the ſacred preſence of its victims, by telling them that poverty is no evil!

Hence alſo we may be led to perceive the miſtake of thoſe perſons who affirm, that the wants which are of the firſt neceſſity, are inconſiderable, and are eaſily ſupplied.

No; that is not inconſiderable, which cannot be purchaſed but by the ſacrifice of the beſt part of my time, and the firſt fruit of my labours.

This is the ſtate of ſociety at the period in which I am born into the world. I cannot remedy the evil, and therefore muſt ſubmit to it. I ought to work up my mind to endure it with courage; I ſhould yield with a chearful and active temper to the inequality of my burthen; but it is neither neceſſary nor deſirable that I ſhould be inſenſible to the true ſtate of the caſe.

Addiſon

Addiſon ludicrouſly exclaims in his tragedy of Cato:

What pity 'tis
That we can die but once to ſerve our country!

If the condition of human life correſponded indeed with this patriotic wiſh, a man might content himſelf to paſs through one of its repetitions under the preſſure of great diſadvantages. But, when we recollect that we appear but once upon this theatre, that our life is ſhort and precarious, that we riſe out of nothing, and that, when we die, we "paſs a bourne from which no traveller returns*;" we cannot but deeply regret, that our exertions are ſo many ways fettered and drawn aſide from their true direction, and that the life we would improve for happineſs or for honour, is almoſt inevitably rendered in a great degree abortive.

The genuine wealth of man is leiſure, when it meets with a diſpoſition to improve it. All other riches are of petty and inconſiderable value.

Is there not a ſtate of ſociety practicable, in which leiſure ſhall be made the inheritance of every one of its members?

* Shakeſpear.

ESSAY II.

OF AVARICE AND PROFUSION.

WHICH character deſerves our preference, the man of avaricious habits, or of profuſe ones? Which of the two conducts himſelf in the manner moſt beneficial to ſociety? Which of the two is actuated by motives the moſt conſonant to juſtice and virtue?

Riches and poverty are in ſome degree neceſſarily incidental to the ſocial exiſtence of man. There is no alternative, but that men muſt either have their portion of labour aſſigned them by the ſociety at large, and the produce collected into a common ſtock; or that each man muſt be left to exert the portion of induſtry, and cultivate the habits of economy, to which his mind ſhall prompt him.

The firſt of theſe modes of exiſtence deſerves our fixed diſapprobation *. It is a ſtate of ſlavery and imbecility. It reduces the exertions of a human being to the level of a piece of mechaniſm, prompted by no perſonal motives, com-

* Political Juſtice, Book VIII, Chap. II, octavo edition.

penſated

penſated and alleviated by no genuine paſſions. It puts an end to that independence and individuality, which are the genuine characteriſtics of an intellectual exiſtence, and without which nothing eminently honourable, generous or delightful can in any degree ſubſiſt.

Inequality therefore being to a certain extent unavoidable, it is the province of juſtice and virtue to counteract the practical evils which inequality has a tendency to produce. It is certain that men will differ from each other in their degrees of induſtry and economy. But it is not leſs certain, that the wants of one man are ſimilar to the wants of another, and that the ſame things will conduce to the improvement and happineſs of each, except ſo far as either is corrupted by the oppreſſive and tyrannical condition of the ſociety in which he is born. The nature of man requires, that each man ſhould be truſted with a diſcretionary power. The principles of virtue require, that the advantages exiſting in any community ſhould be equally adminiſtered; or that the inequalities which inevitably ariſe, ſhould be repreſſed, and kept down within as narrow limits as poſſible.

Does the conduct of the avaricious man, or of the man of profuſion, beſt contribute to this end?

That

That we may try the queſtion in the moſt impartial manner, we will ſet out of the view the man who ſubjects himſelf to expences which he is unable to diſcharge. We will ſuppoſe it admitted, that the conduct of the man, whoſe proceedings tend to a continual accumulation of debt, is eminently pernicious. It does not contribute to his own happineſs. It drives him to the perpetual practice of ſubterfuges. It obliges him to treat men, not according to their wants or their merits, but according to their importunity. It fixes on him an ever gnawing anxiety that poiſons all his pleaſures. He is altogether a ſtranger to that genuine lightneſs of heart, which characteriſes the man at eaſe, and the man of virtue. Care has placed her brand conſpicuous on his brow. He is ſubject to occaſional paroxyſms of anguiſh which no luxuries or ſplendour can compenſate. He accuſes the ſyſtem of nature of poiſonous infection, but the evil is in his own ſyſtem of conduct.

The pains he ſuffers in himſelf are the obvious counterpart of the evils he inflicts upon others. He might have foreſeen the effects of his own conduct, and that foreſight might have taught him to avoid it. But foreſight was in many inſtances to them impracticable. They ſuffer, not in conſequence of their own extravagance.

They

They cannot take to themſelves the miſerable conſolation, that, if now they are diſtreſſed, they have at leaſt laviſhed their money themſelves, and had their period of profuſion and riot.

There is no reaſon to be found in the code of impartial juſtice, why one man ſhould work, while another man is idle. Mechanical and daily labour is the deadlieſt foe to all that is great and admirable in the human mind. But the ſpendthrift is not merely content, that other men ſhould labour, while he is idle. They have reconciled themſelves to that. They have found that, though unjuſt in itſelf, they cannot change the ſyſtem of political ſociety; and they ſubmit to their lot. They conſole themſelves with recollecting the ſtipulated compenſation of their labours. But he is not ſatisfied that they ſhould labour for his gratification: he obliges them to do this gratuitouſly; he trifles with their expectations; he baffles their hopes; he ſubjects them to a long ſucceſſion of tormenting uncertainties. They labour indeed; but they do not conſume the commodities they produce, nor derive the ſmalleſt advantage from their induſtry. "We have laboured; and other men have entered into the fruits of our labours *."

Setting therefore out of the queſtion the man

* John, Chap. viii, ver. 38.

who

who ſubjects himſelf to expences which he is unable to diſcharge, it may prove inſtructive to us to enquire into the propriety of the maxim ſo currently eſtabliſhed in human ſociety, that it is the duty of the rich man to live up to his fortune.

Induſtry has been thought a pleaſing ſpectacle. What more delightful than to ſee our provinces covered with corn, and our ports crowded with veſſels? What more admirable than the products of human ingenuity? magnificent buildings, plentiful markets, immenſe cities? How innumerable the arts of the leſs favoured members of ſociety to extort from the wealthy ſome portion of their riches? How many paths have been ſtruck out for the acquiſition of money? How various are the channels of our trade? How coſtly and curious the different claſſes of our manufactures? Is not this much better, than that the great maſs of ſociety ſhould wear out a miſerable exiſtence in idleneſs and want?

It is thus that ſuperficial obſervers have reaſoned, and theſe have been termed the elements of political wiſdom. It has been inferred, that the moſt commendable proceeding in a man of wealth, is to encourage the manufacture of his country, and to ſpend as large a portion of his property as poſſible in generating this beautiful ſpectacle of a multitude of human beings, in-

duſtriouſly employed, well fed, warmly clothed, cleanly and contented.

Another view of the ſubject which has led to the ſame concluſion is, that the wealth any man poſſeſſes is ſo much of pleaſure and happineſs, capable of being enjoyed, partly by himſelf, partly by others; that it is his duty to ſcatter the ſeeds of pleaſure and happineſs as widely as poſſible; and that it is more uſeful that he ſhould exchange his ſuperfluity for their labour, than that he ſhould maintain them in idleneſs and dependence.

Theſe views of the ſubject are both of them erroneous. Money is the repreſentative and the means of exchange to real commodities; it is no real commodity itſelf. The wages of the labourer and the artiſan have always been ſmall; and, as long as the extreme inequality of conditions ſubſiſts, will always remain ſo. If the rich man would ſubſtantially relieve the burthens of the poor, excluſive of the improvement he may communicate to their underſtandings or their temper, it muſt be by taking upon himſelf a part of their labour, and not by ſetting them taſks. All other relief is partial and temporary.

Three or four hundred years ago in England, there was little of manufacture, and little comparatively of manual labour. Yet the great proprietors

prietors found then, as they find now, that they could not centre the employment of their wealth entirely in themſelves; they could not devour to their own ſhare all the corn and oxen and ſheep they were pleaſed to call their property. There were not then commodities, decorations of their perſons, their wives and their houſes, ſufficient to conſume their ſuperfluity. Thoſe which exiſted, were cumbrous and durable, a legacy handed down from one generation to another; not as now, a perpetual drain for wealth and ſpur to induſtry. They generouſly therefore gave away what they could not expend, that it might not rot upon their hands. It was equitable however in their idea, that they ſhould receive ſome compenſation for their benefits. What they required of their beneficiaries, was that they ſhould wear their liveries, and by their perſonal attendance contribute to the ſplendour of their lords.

It happened then, as it muſt always happen, that the lower orders of the community could not be entirely ſtarved out of the world.

The commodities that ſubſtantially contribute to the ſubſiſtence of the human ſpecies, form a very ſhort catalogue. They demand from us but a ſlender portion of induſtry. If theſe only were produced, and ſufficiently produced, the

ſpecies of man would be continued. If the labour neceſſarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and ſtill more if it were equitably divided among all, each man's ſhare of labour would be light, and his portion of leiſure would be ample. There was a time, when this leiſure would have been of ſmall comparative value. It is to be hoped that the time will come, when it will be applied to the moſt important purpoſes. Thoſe hours which are not required for the production of the neceſſaries of life, may be devoted to the cultivation of the underſtanding, the enlarging our ſtock of knowledge, the refining our taſte, and thus opening to us new and more exquiſite ſources of enjoyment. It is not neceſſary that all our hours of leiſure ſhould be dedicated to intellectual purſuits; it is probable that the well-being of man would be beſt promoted by the production of ſome ſuperfluities and luxuries, though certainly not of ſuch as an ill-imagined and exclusive vanity now teaches us to admire; but there is no reaſon in the ſyſtem of the univerſe or the nature of man, why any individual ſhould be deprived of the means of intellectual cultivation.

It was perhaps neceſſary that a period of monopoly and oppreſſion ſhould ſubſiſt, before a period of cultivated equality could ſubſiſt. Sa-

vages

vages perhaps would never have been excited to the diſcovery of truth and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which ſuch a period affords. But ſurely, after the ſavage ſtate has ceaſed, and men have ſet out in the glorious career of diſcovery and invention, monopoly and oppreſſion cannot be neceſſary to prevent them from returning to a ſtate of barbariſm. Thus much is certain, that a ſtate of cultivated equality, is that ſtate which, in ſpeculation and theory, appears moſt conſonant to the nature of man, and moſt conducive to the extenſive diffuſion of felicity.

It is reaſonable therefore to take this ſtate as a ſort of polar ſtar, in our ſpeculations upon the tendency of human actions. Without entering into the queſtion whether ſuch a ſtate can be realiſed in its utmoſt extent, we may venture to pronounce that mode of ſociety beſt, which moſt nearly approaches this ſtate. It is deſirable that there ſhould be, in any rank of ſociety, as little as may be of that luxury, the object of which is to contribute to the ſpurious gratifications of vanity; that thoſe who are leaſt favoured with the gifts of fortune, ſhould be condemned to the ſmalleſt practicable portion of compulſory labour; and that no man ſhould be obliged to devote his life to the ſervitude of a galley-ſlave, and the ignorance of a beaſt.

How

How far does the conduct of the rich man who lives up to his fortune on the one hand, and of the avaricious man on the other, contribute to the placing of human beings in the condition in which they ought to be placed?

Every man who invents a new luxury, adds ſo much to the quantity of labour entailed on the lower orders of ſociety. The ſame may be affirmed of every man who adds a new diſh to his table, or who impoſes a new tax upon the inhabitants of his country. It is a groſs and ridiculous error to ſuppoſe that the rich pay for any thing. There is no wealth in the world except this, the labour of man*. What is miſnamed wealth, is merely a power veſted in certain individuals by the inſtitutions of ſociety, to compel others to labour for their benefit. So much labour is requiſite to produce the neceſſaries of life; ſo much more to produce thoſe ſuperfluities which at preſent exiſt in any country. Every new luxury is a new weight thrown into the ſcale. The poor are ſcarcely ever benefited by this. It adds a certain portion to the maſs of their labour; but it adds nothing to their conveniences*. Their wages are not changed. They are paid no more now for the work of ten hours, than before for the work of eight. They ſupport the

* Political Juſtice, Book VIII, Chap. II, octavo edition.

burthen; but they come in for no ſhare of the fruit. If a rich man employ the poor in breaking up land and cultivating its uſeful productions, he may be their benefactor. But, if he employ them in erecting palaces, in ſinking canals, in laying out his parks, and modelling his pleaſure-grounds, he will be found, when rightly conſidered, their enemy. He is adding to the weight of oppreſſion, and the vaſt accumulation of labour, by which they are already ſunk beneath the level of the brutes. His miſtaken munificence ſpreads its baleful effects on every ſide; and he is entailing curſes on men he never ſaw, and poſterity yet unborn.

Such is the real tendency of the conduct of that ſo frequently applauded character, the rich man who lives up to his fortune. His houſes, his gardens, his equipages, his horſes, the luxury of his table, and the number of his ſervants, are ſo many articles that may aſſume the name of munificence, but that in reality are but added expedients for grinding the poor, and filling up the meaſure of human calamity. Let us ſee what is the tendency of the conduct of the avaricious man in this reſpect.

He recogniſes, in his proceedings at leaſt, if not as an article of his creed, that great principle of auſtere and immutable juſtice, that the claims

of

of the rich man are no more extenſive than thoſe of the poor, to the ſumptuouſneſs and pamperings of human exiſtence. He watches over his expenditure with unintermitted ſcrupuloſity; and, though enabled to indulge himſelf in luxuries, he has the courage to practiſe an entire ſelf-denial.

It may be alleged indeed that, if he do not conſume his wealth upon himſelf, neither does he impart it to another; he carefully locks it up, and pertinaciouſly withholds it from general uſe. But this point does not ſeem to have been rightly underſtood. The true development and definition of the nature of wealth have not been applied to illuſtrate it. Wealth conſiſts in this only, the commodities raiſed and foſtered by human labour. But he locks up neither corn, nor oxen, nor clothes, nor houſes. Theſe things are uſed and conſumed by his contemporaries, as truly and to as great an extent, as if he were a beggar. He is the lineal ſucceſſor of thoſe religious fanatics of former ages, who conveyed to their heirs all that they had, and took themſelves an oath of voluntary poverty. If he mean to act as the enemy of mankind, he is wretchedly deceived. Like the dotard in Eſop's fables, when he examines his hoard, he will find that he has locked up nothing but pebbles and dirt.

His conduct is much leſs pernicious to mankind, and much more nearly conformable to the unalterable principles of juſtice, than that of the man who diſburſes his income in what has been termed, a liberal and ſpirited ſtyle. It remains to compare their motives, and to conſider which of them has familiariſed himſelf moſt truly with the principles of morality.

It is not to be ſuppoſed, when a man, like the perſon of ſplendour and magnificence, is found continually offending againſt the rights, and adding to the miſeries, of mankind; and when it appears, in addition to this, that all his expences are directed to the pampering his debauched appetites, or the indulging an oſtentatious and arrogant temper;——It is not, I ſay, to be ſuppoſed in this caſe, that the man is actuated by very virtuous and commendable motives.

It would be idle to hold up the miſer as a pattern of benevolence. But it will not perhaps be found an untenable poſition to ſay, that his mind is in the habit of frequently recurring to the beſt principles of morality. He ſtrips the world of its gaudy plumage, and views it in its genuine colours. He eſtimates ſplendid equipages and coſtly attire, exactly, or nearly, at their true value. He feels with acute ſenſibility the

the folly of waſting the wealth of a province upon a meal. He knows that a man may be as alert, as vigorous, and as happy, whoſe food is the roots of the earth, and whoſe drink the running ſtream. He underſtands all this in the ſame ſenſe and with the ſame perſpicuity, as the profoundeſt philoſopher.

It is true indeed that he exaggerates his principles, and applies them to points to which upon better examination they would not be found applicable. His ſyſtem would not only drive out of the world that luxury, which unnerves and debaſes the men that practiſe it, and is the principal ſource of all the oppreſſion, ignorance and guilt which infeſt the face of the earth: it is alſo inimical to thoſe arts, by which life is improved, the underſtanding cultivated, and the taſte refined. It would deſtroy painting, and muſic, and the ſplendour of public exhibitions. Literature itſelf would languiſh under its frigid empire. But our cenſure would be extenſive indeed, if we condemned every enthuſiaſt of any ſcience or principle, who exaggerated its maxims.

After every deduction, it will ſtill be found that the miſer conſiders himſelf as a man, entitled to expend upon himſelf only what the wants of man require. He ſees, and truly ſees,

the folly of profuſion. It is this perception of the genuine principles of morality, it is this conſciouſneſs of unaſſailable truth, that ſupport him in the ſyſtem of conduct he has choſen. He perceives, when you endeavour to perſuade him to alter his ſyſtem, that your arguments are the arguments of ſophiſtry and miſrepreſentation. Were it not for this, he would not be able conſtantly to reſiſt the force of expoſtulation and the ſhafts of ridicule. Were it not for this, he could not ſubmit to the uniform practice of ſelf-denial, and the general obloquy he encounters from a world of which he is comparatively the benefactor.

Such appears to be the genuine reſult of the compariſon between the votary of avarice and the man of profuſion. It by no means follows from the preference we feel compelled to cede to the former, that he is not fairly chargeable with enormous miſtakes. Money, though in itſelf deſtitute of any real value, is an engine enabling us to veſt the actual commodities of life in ſuch perſons and objects, as our underſtandings may point out to us. This engine, which might be applied to moſt admirable purpoſes, the miſer conſtantly refuſes to employ. The uſe of wealth is no doubt a ſcience attended with uncommon difficulties. But it is not leſs evident that, by a

maſter

maſter in the ſcience, it might be applied, to chear the miſerable, to relieve the oppreſſed, to aſſiſt the manly adventurer, to advance ſcience, and to encourage art. A rich man, guided by the genuine principles of virtue, would be munificent, though not with that ſpurious munificence that has ſo often uſurped the name. It may however almoſt be doubted whether the conduct of the miſer, who wholly abſtains from the uſe of riches, be not more advantageous to mankind, than the conduct of the man who, with honourable intentions, is continually miſapplying his wealth to what he calls public benefits and charitable uſes.

It deſerves to be remarked that the prejudice and folly of the world has frequently beſtowed the epithet of miſer upon a man, merely for the parſimony and ſimplicity of his ſtyle of living, who has been found, whenever a real and unqueſtionable occaſion occurred, to be actuated by the beſt charities and the moſt liberal ſpirit in his treatment of others. Such a man might anſwer his calumniators in the words of Louis the twelfth of France, I had rather my countrymen ſhould laugh at my parſimony, than weep for my injuſtice and oppreſſion.

This ſpeculation upon the comparative merits of avarice and profuſion, may perhaps be found

to be of greater importance than at firſt ſight might be imagined. It includes in it the firſt principles of morality, and of juſtice between man and man. It ſtrikes at the root of a deception that has long been continued, and long proved a curſe to all the civiliſed nations of the earth. It tends to familiariſe the mind to thoſe ſtrict and ſevere principles of judging, without which our energy, as well as our uſefulneſs, will lie in a very narrow compaſs. It contains the germs of a code of political ſcience, and may perhaps be found intimately connected with the extenſive diffuſion of liberty and happineſs.

ESSAY III.

OF BEGGARS.

THE uſe of wealth is a ſcience attended with uncommon difficulties.

This is a propoſition that would prove extremely revolting to thoſe whom fortune has placed under no very urgent neceſſity of ſtudying this ſcience. The poor imagine they can very eaſily tell in what manner a rich man ought to diſpoſe of his wealth. They ſcarcely ever impute to him ignorance, ſcruples or difficulties. If he do not act as they would have him, they aſcribe it to the want of will to perform his duty, not to the want of knowledge as to what duty preſcribes.

The firſt obſervation that offers itſelf, is, that he cannot give to all that aſk, nor even to all that want, for his faculty in this reſpect is limited. There muſt therefore be a ſelection.

The limitation of his faculties is however by no means the only difficulty that preſents itſelf to a rich man in the employment of his riches. Knotty points, uncertainties, and a balance of good

good and evil as to almoſt every caſe that can occur, preſent themſelves on every ſide.

This may be illuſtrated from the trite queſtion reſpecting the relief of common beggars. Much has been written and remarked upon this ſubject, but perhaps it is not yet exhauſted.

The caſe in their favour is an obvious one. What they appear to ſtand in need of, is food and ſhelter, articles of the firſt neceſſity. I can ſcarcely look at them without imagining their wants to be urgent. It is paſt diſpute that their ſituation is unfortunate, worthy of interference and pity. What they aſk is of very trivial value. No man can be ſo dead to the firſt feelings of the heart, ſo hardened by long practice of the world and the frequent ſight of calamity, as not to know that the firſt impulſe of the mind is to direct us to comply. If an angelic being were to deſcend from a ſuperior ſphere, ignorant of the modes of human life and the nature of human character, and were to ſee a poor, half-naked, ſhivering creature, entreating in the moſt doleful accents the gift of the ſmalleſt coin, while another creature, with all the exterior of eaſe and comfort, paſſed by, and turned a deaf ear to the complaint, he would pronounce this man corrupt, cruel and unfeeling, the diſgrace of a rational nature.

Yet there are men that do honour to our nature, who regard it as a duty to conduct themſelves in this manner.

Riches is a relative term. Many men who are enabled to maintain an appearance of eaſe and comfort, and have ſomething to ſpare, if they have daily occaſion to traverſe the ſtreets of this metropolis, would find their purſe exhauſted, and themſelves unable to ſupport the drain, if they were to give, to every beggar they met, no more than the preciſe ſum which cuſtom has taught him to demand. The richeſt nobleman would find a liberal relief of common beggars amount to ſo ſerious a ſum, as would oblige him, if he were prudent and conſcientious, to conſider maturely whether this were the moſt uſeful mode in which it could be expended. It was the multiplicity of common beggars, that firſt taught men at eaſe in their circumſtances to heſitate reſpecting the propriety of indiſcriminately relieving them.

Another circumſtance which was calculated to ſuggeſt doubts, is the impudence and importunity which are frequently practiſed by thoſe who purſue the trade of a common beggar. It is ſufficiently evident reſpecting many that infeſt the ſtreets of London, that they depend upon this

this as their principal reſource. Their cry is loud; their demand is inceſſantly repeated; they obſtinately attach themſelves to your ſteps; and it is only by a manner as reſolute as theirs that you can ſhake them off. There is ſomething in the human mind that lends its aid to their project. We are at leaſt not ſure but that we ſhall do right in relieving them. A ſuſpicion of duty joins itſelf with the deſire to rid ourſelves of a troubleſome intruſion, and we yield to their demand. This is not however an action that we review with much complacency; and it inevitably communicates a ſentiment of ſcepticiſm to the whole ſyſtem.

A third circumſtance which produces a ſimilar effect, is the impoſtures which we frequently diſcover in this ſpecies of ſuitors. The whole avocation ſeems reduced to an art. They cannot be always in that paroxyſm of ſorrow, the expreſſion of which ſo many of them endeavour to throw into their voice. If we obſerve them from a diſtance, we frequently perceive that they are talking tranquilly and at their eaſe, and we diſcover that a part of their miſery is made for other perſons to ſee, not for themſelves to feel. They are careful to expoſe the parts of their bodies that are diſeaſed; they affect an appearance of being

being more wretched than they are; not ſeldom they aſſume the guiſe of infirmities to which they are really ſtrangers.

Beggars are of two claſſes. Thoſe who practiſe the vocation for a time only, driven by the preſſure of ſome overwhelming calamity; and thoſe who regard it as the regular ſource of their ſubſiſtence.

The firſt of theſe are principally entitled to our kindneſs. Yet there may be danger of ſome ill conſequences to ariſe from an indiſcriminate relief to be extended to theſe. It is good that men ſhould be taught to depend upon their own exertions. That cowardice, which induces us willingly to ſuppoſe that the miſchief we experience is beyond their reach, is a pernicious vice. It induces us to look to a precarious, inſtead of a certain remedy. It robs us of half our energy, and all our independence. It ſteals from us thoſe eminent ſources of happineſs, ſelf-complacence and the exultation of conſcious rectitude.

But the principal danger attending the relief of the firſt claſs of beggars, is that it ſhould induce them to enliſt themſelves in the ſecond. The relief they venture to ſolicit from any individual, is by no means adequate to their ſupply. Their ſtory therefore muſt be often repeated, be-

fore the preſſure which drove them to this expedient can be adequately removed. Each repetition renders the practice eaſier, and invites the ſufferer to repeat it oftener than he originally purpoſed. It is no wonder, that even the miſerable trade of a common beggar ſhould have its allurements, to perſons who find themſelves condemned by the condition of their birth to inceſſant labour, a labour which, however iniquitous in its magnitude, is inſufficient to reſcue them from hunger and miſery, and which, odious and oppreſſive as it is, they are frequently compelled to regard as a bleſſing, and are frequently deprived of the occaſion to perform. The trade of a common beggar has the temptation of idleneſs, and is often found to produce conſiderably more than the amount of the wages of an induſtrious workman.

Let us turn from the beggar who exerciſes the vocation for a time only, driven by the preſſure of ſome overwhelming calamity, to the beggar who regards it as the regular ſource of his ſubſiſtence.

Of all the characters in which human nature is depraved, there is not perhaps one that a man of true virtue and diſcernment will regard with more pain than this ſpecies of beggar.

Look

Look through the catalogue of vices, of moral defects and deformities, that are incident to the heart of man! If you aſk me to point out which are worſt, there are two that I will cover with my hand, as being thoſe that I cannot think of, or advert to, but with the moſt poignant regret; inſincerity, and a temper abject and ſervile.

The employment of him who has taken up for life the trade of a beggar, is one routine of hypocriſy. If he were to tell the truth, it would be of no uſe to him. It would not extort a farthing from the tendereſt-hearted man that lives. But his tongue and truth have taken a laſting leave of each other. He ſcarcely ſo much as knows what it means. He is all a counterfeit. The melancholy tone of his voice, the forlornneſs of his geſtures, the tale that he tells, are ſo many conſtituent parts of one infamous drama. He is the outcaſt of mankind.

Nor is his ſervility leſs than his falſhood. There is no vile trick of fawning and flattery in which he is not an adept. You would think him the humbleſt creature that lives. Trample upon him, and he would expreſs no reſentment. He ſeems to look up to his petty benefactor, or the man he hopes to render ſuch, as to a height that it makes the eyes ache to contemplate.

plate. He pours forth his bleſſings and prayers for you in ſo copious a ſtream, that the powers of ſpeech ſeem to labour beneath the vaſtneſs of his gratitude. The baſeneſs imputed to the ſpaniel, is put to ſhame by the vileneſs of this man. He is the moſt abject thing upon the face of the earth.

The true element of man is to utter what he thinks. He is indeed a man, who willingly expoſes his whole ſoul to my obſervation. He is not ſubject to the continual neceſſity of weighing his words; for he has an unvarniſhed ſtory to tell, and the ſtory itſelf ſupplies him with eloquence. He expreſſes his genuine feelings. If he is depreſſed, he deſcribes his misfortune in the way that he ſees it. If he is rejoiced, he does not attempt to conceal his joy. He does not endeavour to appear any thing but what he is.

He walks erect, an equal among his equals. He aſks of you nothing but what you ought to grant him, and he aſks it with a firm tone, and an unembarraſſed countenance. He is no man's ſlave. He is full of kindneſs to all, but he cannot ſtoop to practiſe ſuppleneſs and flattery to any. He derives his reſources from himſelf, and therefore cannot be a dependent.

Such

Such a man cannot fail to be of ſome uſe in the world. He ſhows an example inexpreſſibly uſeful. He is active, and therefore at once derives benefits, and confers them. Every day that he lives counts for ſomething; and for every day that he lives mankind, through ſome of their ramifications, are the better.

There is no man, with an underſtanding and a heart, that would not make conſiderable exertions and conſiderable ſacrifices to preſerve a being like this.

It is contrary to the true intereſt and policy of the human ſpecies to deſtroy a man, becauſe he is uſeleſs; or even perhaps becauſe he is noxious. But there are men whom, if we would not deſtroy, we ought to rejoice to hear that ſome caſualty had deſtroyed. For man to be deſtroyed by the hands of man, is a proceeding fraught with alarming conſequences. But men who are worſe than an incumbrance upon the face of the earth, it would be well, to ſpeak in the jargon of the vulgar, if God would be pleaſed to take to himſelf. Such men it is to be feared, if they ſhould be found incorrigible in their habits, are common beggars. They are the opprobrium of human nature, and the earth would feel itſelf lightened by their removal. We may ſympathiſe with them as creatures ſuſ-

ceptible of pleaſure and pain, but we cannot reaſonably deſire a protraction of their exiſtence *.

To contribute by our alms to retain a man a day longer in ſuch a profeſſion, inſtead of removing him out of it, is not an act that we can regard with much complacence. To incite by

* What is here ſaid, requires perhaps to be guarded againſt miſconſtruction. For this purpoſe let two things be recollected.

Firſt, beggars in themſelves conſidered, do not deſerve to be made the ſubjects of pain, or to be abridged of pleaſure; for no man deſerves this. If in any inſtance there be a congruity between a given character, and an aſſignable degree of ſuffering, negative or affirmative, this congruity is founded in a recollection of what is due to others, not of what is due to him. Add to this, that no claſs of men ought to be regarded as incorrigible. We are ſpeaking here of a certain deſcription as applicable to common beggars; but it cannot perhaps be affirmed of any man, though now a common beggar, that he may not be made a valuable member of the community.

Secondly, it is here affirmed of common beggars, that, while they remain ſuch, they are uſeleſs, and injurious to ſociety. It is of common beggars only that we are here called upon to ſpeak. But of how many other orders of men might the ſame thing be affirmed? How few comparatively are thoſe, that might not be ſtruck out of the roll of exiſtence, and never be miſſed? How few, of whom it might not juſtly be decided, that they are nugatory and neutral, if not hoſtile, to the cauſe of mankind? Let not then the common beggar be held up as the excluſive object of our diſapprobation! Political Juſtice, Vol. I. p. 273, octavo edition.

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our alms a man to embrace this profeſſion, who is not yet fallen into that ſtate of degradation, is an act that a man of virtue would look back upon with the ſevereſt regret.

Such are the objections and difficulties that occur as to the relief of beggars. They are certainly of very ſerious importance. Yet they are ſcarcely of ſuch weight, as to induce a man of feeling and humanity uniformly to withhold his interference.

We muſt not be too ſevere in our judgment of men, when it is certain, or even probable, that they are under the preſſure of uncommon diſtreſs. We ought to be juſt, but a ſeverity of this ſort is at war with juſtice. A virtuous man will feel himſelf ſtrongly prompted to do an action, even when there is only a probability that it may alleviate great miſery, or produce exquiſite enjoyment. Nothing is more ſuſpicious than a ſyſtem of conduct, which, forming itſelf inflexibly on general rules, refuſes to take the impreſſion, and yield to the dictates, of circumſtances as they may ariſe.

It is ſaid that men that are idle, may, if they pleaſe, procure themſelves employment. This is eaſily ſaid by men at eaſe. But do we not often ſee, by ſome viciſſitude in the manufactures of a country for example, multitudes of

'men at once thruſt out of employment? Can all theſe procure themſelves employment of another ſort?

"They can procure themſelves employment," we are told. Be it ſo! But when? Does not the ſubſtitution of one manufacture or induſtry for another require time? Does it not require time for an individual, thruſt out of one avocation, to gain admittance to another? But in the mean while he is in need of clothing and ſhelter; in the mean while he is without bread to eat. This is the particular aggravation of human calamities: not that we muſt maintain ourſelves by our own induſtry; but that we cannot gain time for deliberation, for expedients, for prudence, and for preparation.

Let us not treat the adverſities of men with a ſpirit of levity. It is a ſerious hardſhip, after having devoted myſelf to one profeſſion, and accompliſhed myſelf with one ſpecies of ſkill, to be driven forth in purſuit of another. This is a ſituation that requires kindneſs and ſoothing. Who art thou, that aſſumeſt to deck thy brows in frowns, and to drive away the ſorrows of thy brother by imperious tones and ſtern rebuke?

The very prejudices and weakneſſes of mankind have a claim upon our indulgence. The whole end of virtue, all that is to be deſired for

man,

man, is the procuring of pleaſure and the averting of pain. Thoſe evils, which in a different temper of mind would appear to be no evils, but which through the medium of prejudice wake up agony in my boſom, are under my preſent circumſtances real and important evils, and ought to be treated as ſuch. It would therefore be a real evil to many, to be obliged to change the functions of a clerk in a public office, for thoſe of a ſcavenger who ſweeps the ſtreets, though perhaps in themſelves conſidered, the one may be no more eligible than the other.

No ſpectacle is more worthy of regret, than that of virtuous intention aſſuming to itſelf all the hardneſs, the moroſe and unkind demeanour, that can belong to the moſt odious vice. There are men, poſſeſſing ſuch intentions, who too often ſhow themſelves void of conſideration for the feelings of others, and can be content to inflict on them the moſt agoniſing ſenſations with an unaltered temper. Wherever they come, they diffuſe frowns and ſeverity. They aſſume to be the cenſors of mankind. And, which is worſt, it generally happens that men, who view the errors of their neighbours with this implacable temper, diſpenſe a meaſure of ſufficient indulgence to their own.

It is a miſtake however to ſuppoſe that the

auſterely virtuous, are commonly perſons endowed with a ſmall portion of feeling. It will perhaps be found, that they are frequently endowed with feelings the moſt uneaſy and irrepreſſible. The maſter, to whom probably I ought to be leaſt willing to be a ſlave, is rather the paſſionate, than the impenetrable man. The perſons here ſpoken of, are uſually little ſubject to apathy and inſenſibility. While they inflict evil upon others, or refuſe their ſuccour and interference, they are by no means conſcious of inward complacence. They are in reality anxious to do juſtice; their minds are full of ſecret tumult and contradiction; and it is to this cauſe we are to aſcribe it, if the aſperity, fermenting in their own boſoms, overflow upon others. When therefore we recollect their errors, we ſhall recollect them, if we are impartial, with ſentiments of the moſt poignant regret and ſympathy.

The rule that ought to govern us in our treatment of mankind in general, ſeems to be beſt underſtood in the caſe of kindred and relations. Here men are commonly ſufficiently aware that, though it is poſſible to diſpenſe aſſiſtance with too laviſh a hand, yet aſſiſtance may often be given, in proportion to my capacity to aſſiſt, with much advantage and little chance of in-

jury. The true mode of benefiting others, is not through the medium of anguiſh and torture. I cannot be ſure that I diſtinguiſh rightly between virtue and defect: I cannot be ſure that my efforts to remove defects will be crowned with ſucceſs: I am nevertheleſs contented to endeavour their removal by expedients of affection and kindneſs, but not by the intervention of rigour and auſterity. It becomes me to ſeek, to the extent of my power, to add to men's virtue, as well as happineſs; I may allow myſelf, to a certain degree, in expoſtulation and ſorrow; but I ought perhaps never, of my own mere good-pleaſure, to incarcerate them in the houſe of correction that they may learn wiſdom.

One further conſideration that is of great importance on this ſubject, is, that the caſe of the man who demands my charity in the ſtreets, is often of the moſt preſſing nature, and is therefore no proper field for experiments. I have ſometimes been told, that the exiſtence of beggars is a reproach to the government, and that the evil muſt be ſuffered to gain its proper height to force a remedy. But I cannot conſent to lending even my paſſive aſſiſtance, to the ſtarving men to death, that the laws may be reformed. The police of moſt countries reaſonably ſuſpends the penalties ordinarily commanded,

when the caſe is that of a ſtarving man ſtealing a morſel of bread that he may eat. In the ſame manner, there are ſome ſufferings, ſo great and ſo urgent, that a ſound morality will teach us to diſpenſe with our general maxims, and, for no poſſible calculation of diſtant evils, to turn a deaf ear to the cries of humanity.

ESSAY IV.

OF SERVANTS.

ONE of the moſt conſiderable difficulties that preſent themſelves in the execution of a plan of domeſtic education, relates to the degrees of intercourſe which is to be allowed to take place between children and ſervants.

The parent and the preceptor may be in the utmoſt degree prudent in their conduct, and delicate in their treatment and communications. But ſervants will inevitably counteract the ſalutary reſults. The judicious friends of our infancy may conduct themſelves towards us with an even hand and a prudent rule; but ſervants will ſometimes be deſpotic and unreaſonable, and perhaps oftener prompt to injurious indulgencies, infuſing into the youthful boſom the paſſions of empire and command. They will initiate us in low maxims, and coarſe and vulgar modes of thinking. They will inſtruct us in the practice of cunning, and the arts of deceit. They will teach us to exhibit a ſtudied countenance to thoſe who preſide over us, and to triumph in the ſucceſs

ſucceſs of our duplicity as ſoon as they are withdrawn. They will make us the confidents of their vices. They will accuſtom us to the ſpectacle of falſhood and impoſture. They will terrify us with falſe fears, threaten us with fictitious evils, and inſpire us with the groveling cowardice of a prevailing ſuperſtition.

Such are the evils to be apprehended from an intercourſe of children and ſervants. Yet how, in domeſtic education, is it to be prevented? We cannot make our children priſoners. We have other concerns and other buſineſs in human life, which muſt occaſionally draw us off from attention to them. In fact, it would be a ſtrange perverſion of the ſyſtem of nature and the world, for the adult to devote themſelves to a perpetual attendance on the young; for the trees of the foreſt to be ſacrificed, that their ſlips and offsets may take their growth in the moſt advantageous manner.

A reſource frequently employed in this caſe, is for parents to caution their offspring againſt the intercourſe of menials, and explicitly tell them that the company of ſervants is by no means a ſuitable relaxation for the children of a family.

We are afraid of the improper leſſons which our children ſhould learn from our ſervants: what

what ſort of leſſon is it that we teach them, when we hold to them ſuch language as this?

It is a leſſon of the moſt inſufferable inſolence and magiſterial ariſtocracy, that it is poſſible for any language to convey. We teach them that they are themſelves a precious ſpecies of creatures, that muſt not be touched too rudely, and that are to be fenced round and defended from the common accidents of nature. We ſhow them other human creatures, upon whoſe forehead the ſyſtem of the univerſe has written the appellation of man, whoſe limbs outwardly ſeem to have been formed in the ſame mold, but upon whom we think proper to fix a brand and attach a label with this inſcription, Come not near me! In the exuberance of our humanity perhaps, we inform our children, that theſe creatures are to be tenderly treated, that we muſt neither ſcratch nor bite them, and that, poiſonous and degraded as they are, we muſt rather ſoothe than aggravate their calamity. We may ſhake our heads in arrogant compaſſion of their lot; but we muſt think of them as of the puppy-dog in the hall, who is not to be touched, becauſe he has got the mange.—This leſſon of ſeparation, mixing with the unformed notions of childhood, will almoſt neceſſarily produce the moſt injurious effects.

The dangers above enumerated as likely to attend

attend upon the intercourſe of children and ſervants, are undoubtedly real. It is ſomewhat ſurpriſing that the perception of them ſhould not have led men to reaſon more deeply and generally upon the condition of ſervants.

A rich man has in his houſe various apartments. The lower tier of apartments is inhabited by a ſpecies of beings in whom we apprehend the moſt ſordid defects. If they are not in an emphatical degree criminal, at leaſt their ignorance makes them dangerous, and their ſubjection renders them narrow. The only ſafety to perſons of a generous ſtation, is to avoid their ſociety. Adults are uſually wiſe enough to be aware of this, but the thoughtleſſneſs of childhood renders our offspring perpetually in danger of falling a prey.

If we were told of a man who appropriated a conſiderable portion of his houſe to the habitation of rats, and pole-cats, and ſerpents, and wolves, we certainly ſhould not applaud either his taſte or his judgment.

To a man who had ſtudied philoſophy in the ſchool of ſcience and retirement, who had drawn his leſſons from the ſtorehouſe of reaſon, and was unacquainted with the practices of mankind, the houſe of a rich man would undoubtedly afford an impreſſive ſpectacle.

This

This houſe is inhabited by two claſſes of beings, or, more accurately ſpeaking, by two ſets of men drawn from two diſtant ſtages of barbariſm and refinement. The rich man himſelf, we will ſuppoſe, with the members of his family, are perſons accompliſhed with elegance, taſte and a variety of uſeful and agreeable information. The ſervants below ſtairs, can ſome of them perhaps read without ſpelling, and ſome even write a legible hand.

> But knowledge, to their eyes, her ample page,
> Rich with the ſpoils of time, did ne'er unrol. GRAY.

Their ignorance is thick and groſs. Their miſtakes are of the moſt palpable ſort. So far as relates to any ſpecies of intellectual improvement, they might as well have been born in Otaheite. But this diſturbs not the tranquillity of their maſters. They paſs them with as little conſciouſneſs of true equality, and as little ſenſe of unreſtrained ſympathy, as they paſs the mandarins upon their chimney-pieces.

The fortune of the rich man is expended between two different claſſes of beings, the inmates of the ſame manſion. The firſt claſs conſiſts of the members of the family, the ſecond of the ſervants. The individuals of the firſt claſs have each a purſe well furniſhed. There is ſcarcely a luxury in which they are not at liberty

berty to indulge. There is ſcarcely a caprice which croſſes their fancy, that they cannot gratify. They are attired with every thing that faſhion or taſte can preſcribe, and all in its fineſt texture and its neweſt gloſs. They are incenſed with the moſt coſtly perfumes. They are enabled to call into play every expedient that can contribute to health, the freſhneſs of their complexion, and the ſleekneſs of their ſkin. They are maſters of their time, can paſs from one voluntary labour to another, and reſort, as their fancy prompts, to every ſplendid and coſtly amuſement.

The wealth of the ſervant amounts perhaps to ten or fifteen pounds a year; and it is not unfrequent to hear perſons of ten or fifteen thouſand a year exclaim upon the enormouſneſs of wages. With this he is to purchaſe many articles of his apparel, coarſe in their texture, or already tarniſhed, the ape of finery and wealth. His utmoſt economy is neceſſary, to provide himſelf with theſe. He can ſcarcely obtain for himſelf an occaſional amuſement, or, if he were ſmitten with the deſire of knowledge, the means of inſtruction. If he be put upon board-wages, his firſt enquiry is at how humble a price he can procure a ſordid meal. The purchaſe of his meals for a whole week, would not furniſh out

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the moſt inſignificant diſh for his maſter's table.

This monſtrous aſſociation and union of wealth and poverty together, is one of the moſt aſtoniſhing exhibitions that the human imagination can figure to itſelf. It is voluntary however, at leaſt on the part of the maſter. If it were compulſorily impoſed upon him, there is no chearfulneſs and gaiety of mind, that could ſtand up againſt the melancholy ſcene. It would be a revival of the barbarity of Mezentius, the linking a living body and a dead one together. It would cure the moſt obdurate heart of its partiality for the diſtinction of ranks in ſociety. But, as it is, and as the human mind is conſtituted, there is nothing, however monſtrous, however intolerable to ſober and impartial reaſon, to which cuſtom does not render us callous.

There is one other circumſtance, the object of the ſenſes, characteriſtic of this diſtinction of claſſes in the ſame houſe, which, though inferior to the preceding, deſerves to be mentioned. I amuſe myſelf, ſuppoſe, with viewing the manſion of a man of rank. I admire the ſplendour of the apartments, and the coſtlineſs of their decorations. I paſs from room to room, and find them all ſpacious, lofty and magnificent.

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From their appearance my mind catches a ſenſation of tranquil grandeur. They are ſo carefully poliſhed, ſo airy, ſo perfectly light, that I feel as if it were impoſſible to be melancholy in them. I am even fatigued with their variety.

I will imagine that, after having ſurveyed the reſt of the houſe, the fancy ſtrikes me of viewing the ſervants' offices. I deſcend by a narrow ſtair-caſe. I creep cautiouſly along dark paſſages. I paſs from room to room, but every where is gloom. The light of day never fully enters the apartments. The breath of heaven cannot freely play among them. There is ſomething in the very air that feels muſty and ſtagnant to my ſenſe. The furniture is frugal, unexceptionable perhaps in itſelf, but ſtrangely contraſted with the ſplendour of the reſt of the houſe. If I enter the apartment which each ſervant conſiders as his own, or, it may be, is compelled to ſhare with another, I perceive a general air of ſlovenlineſs and negligence, that amply repreſents to me the depreſſion and humiliated ſtate of mind of its tenant.

I eſcape from this place, as I would eſcape from the ſpectacle of a jail. I cannot return again to the ſplendid apartments I have left. Their furniture has loſt its beauty, and the pictures

tures their charms. I plunge in the depth of groves and the boſom of nature, and weep over the madneſs of artificial ſociety.

Yet, notwithſtanding theſe things, the rich pretend to wonder at the depravity and vices of their ſervants. They are aſtoniſhed that they ſhould enter into a confederacy of robbers, and ſtrip the houſes of their maſters, even at the riſk of the gallows.

Servants have only the choice of an alternative. They muſt either cheriſh a burning envy in their boſoms, an inextinguiſhable abhorrence againſt the injuſtice of ſociety; or, guided by the hopeleſſneſs of their condition, they muſt blunt every finer feeling of the mind, and ſit down in their obſcure retreat, having for the conſtant habits of their reflections, ſlavery and contentment. They can ſcarcely expect to emerge from their depreſſion. They muſt look to ſpend the beſt years of their exiſtence in a miſerable dependence. It is incompatible with their ignorance, that they ſhould be able to look down upon theſe misfortunes with philoſophical tranquillity.

We have been conſidering the condition of ſervants in the houſes of the great. But it is not materially different in the middle claſſes of ſociety. The evil is incurable. It is a radical

defect in the preſent ſyſtem of human intercourſe. Thoſe perſons are to be commended who endeavour to diminiſh the evil; but they will excite in an enlightened obſerver a ſmile of pity for their ſimplicity, when they pretend that they can totally extract the ſting.

Treat a ſervant as you will, he will be a ſervant ſtill. His time is not his own. His condition is infinitely more pitiable, than that of the day-labourer who reaſons upon his functions, and aſcertains the utility of his efforts. He has nothing to do, but to obey; you have nothing to do, but to command. At every moment he is to be called this way, to be ſent that, to run, to ride, to be the vehicle and conduit-pipe to affairs, of which he has neither participation nor knowledge. His great ſtanding rule is to conform himſelf to the will of his maſter. His finiſhing perfection is to change himſelf into a mere machine. He has no plan of life, adding the improvement of today to the progreſs of the day before. He is deſtitute of the beſt characteriſtics of a rational being.

It is abſurd in us for the moſt part to reaſon with them, and endeavour to explain to them the grounds of our commands, unleſs indeed we can make them our companions, the partakers of our counſels, the coadviſers of our undertakings.

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To attempt it in any otherway, is the mockery of equality. We may make them ſurly and mutinous, but we cannot make them free. All that we can perform with ſucceſs, is to exerciſe a mild empire over them, to make our commands few, ſimple and unoppreſſive, and to excite them, if poſſible, to adopt for their leiſure hours purſuits and a buſineſs which ſhall be properly their own.

It has ſometimes been alleged, that ſervants cannot be conſidered as ſlaves, becauſe the engagement into which they enter is a voluntary compact. Suppoſe I could compel a man, by the preſſure of a complication of circumſtances, to ſell himſelf for a ſlave, and authoriſe him to ſpend the purchaſe-money in decorating his own perſon, would he not nevertheleſs be a ſlave? It is the condition under which he exiſts, not the way in which he came into it, that conſtitutes the difference between a freeman and a ſlave. It muſt be acknowledged that the ſlavery of an Engliſh ſervant has its mitigations, and is, in ſeveral intelligible and diſtinct particulars, preferable to that of a Weſt-Indian Negro.

ESSAY V.

OF TRADES AND PROFESSIONS.

IN the world of which man is an inhabitant, there are ſome who, by the eſtabliſhed diſtribution of property, are provided with the means of ſubſiſtence, from the period of their birth, without the intervention of any induſtry of theirs; and others who have no proſpect of obtaining even the neceſſaries of life, but through the medium of their own exertions.

The numbers in this latter claſs are ſo great, and in the former ſo inſignificant, that the latter, whether the queſtion to be conſidered relate to freedom, virtue or happineſs, may well paſs for all, and the former be regarded as nothing.

The claſs of the unprovided, comprehenſive as it is, is ſomewhat ſwelled, by the addition of thoſe perſons who, though provided for by the condition of their birth as to the neceſſaries of life, are yet diſſatisfied, covet ſomething more, and reſort to ſome ſpecies of induſtry or occupation that they may fill up the imaginary deficiency.

From this ſurvey of the human ſpecies it appears that there cannot be a queſtion of greater

importance, than that which every anxious parent aſks concerning his child, which the child, if endowed with foreſight and an active mind, aſks perhaps with ſtill greater anxiety and a ſtill nicer perception, what is the calling or profeſſion to which his future life ſhall be deſtined?

This is probably the queſtion of all others, that irreſiſtibly diſpels the illuſion that cauſes human life to appear in ſuch gaudy colours, and compels the miſerable fabric of civil ſociety to exhibit itſelf in all its deformity.

To what calling or profeſſion ſhall the future life of my child be devoted?—Alas! I ſurvey them all; I cauſe each ſucceſſively to paſs in review before me: but my mind can reſt upon none: there is not one that a virtuous mind can regard with complacency, or ſelect with any genuine eagerneſs of choice! What ſort of a ſcene then is that in the midſt of which we live; where all is blank, repulſive, odious; where every buſineſs and employment is found contagious and fatal to all the beſt characteriſtics of man, and proves the fruitful parent of a thouſand hateful vices?

Trade in ſome form or other is the deſtination of the majority of thoſe, to whom induſtry is either in part or in whole made the ſource of pe-

cuniary income. Let us analyſe the principles of trade.

The earth is the ſufficient means, either by the fruit it produces, or the animals it breeds, of the ſubſiſtence of man. A ſmall quantity of human labour, when mixed and incorporated with the bounties of nature, is found perfectly adequate to the purpoſes of ſubſiſtence. This ſmall quantity it is, in the ſtrictneſs of moral obligation, every man's duty to contribute; unleſs perhaps, in rare inſtances, it can be ſhown that the labour of ſome, directed to a higher ſpecies of uſefulneſs, would be injuriouſly interrupted by the intervention of this trivial portion of mechanical and ſubordinate labour.

This is the ſimple and undebauched view of man in, what we may call, his ſtate of innocence. In the experiment of human ſociety it is found that the diviſion of labour tends conſiderably to diminiſh the burthen to which it would otherwiſe amount, and to forward the improvement of human ſkill and ingenuity. This variation does not neceſſarily produce any defalcation from the purity of human motives and actions. Were the members of any community ſufficiently upright and diſintereſted, I might ſupply my neighbour with the corn he wanted, and he ſupply me with

with the cloth of which I was in need, without having recourſe to the groveling and ungenerous methods of barter and ſale. We might ſupply each other for this reaſon only, becauſe one party had a ſuperfluity and the other a want, without in the ſmalleſt degree adverting to a reciprocal bounty to be by this method engendered; and we might depend upon the correſponding upright and diſintereſted affections of the other members of the community, for the being in like manner ſupplied with the commodities of which we were in want *.

Liberal and generous habits of thinking and acting, are the growth only of a high degree of civiliſation and refinement. It was to be expected therefore that, in the coarſe and narrow ſtate of human ſociety, in which the diviſion of labour was firſt introduced, the illiberal ideas of barter and ſale would ſpeedily follow.

The perſons who firſt had recourſe to theſe ideas, undoubtedly were not aware what a complication of vices and miſery they were preparing for mankind. Barter and ſale being once introduced, the invention of a circulating medium in the precious metals gave ſolidity to the evil, and afforded a field upon which for the rapacity

* Political Juſtice, Book VIII, Chap. VIII, octavo edition.

and ſelfiſhneſs of man to develop all their refinements.

It is from this point that the inequality of fortunes took their commencement. Here began to be exhibited the ſenſeleſs profuſion of ſome and the inſatiable avarice of others. It is an old remark, that there is no avarice ſo great and ſo deſtitute of ſhame, as that of the licentious prodigal.

Avarice is not ſo thoroughly diſplayed in the preſervation, as in the accumulation, of wealth. The chief method by which wealth can be begun to be accumulated by him who is deſtitute of it, is trade, the tranſactions of barter and ſale.

The trader or merchant is a man the grand effort of whoſe life is directed to the purſuit of gain. This is true to a certain degree of the lawyer, the ſoldier and the divine, of every man who propoſes by ſome ſpecies of induſtry to acquire for himſelf a pecuniary income. But there is a great difference in this reſpect. Other men, though, it may be, their firſt object in chooſing their calling was the acquiſition of income, yet have their attention frequently diverted from this object, by the progreſs of reputation, or the improvements of which they have a proſpect in the art they purſue. The trader begins, proceeds and concludes with this one

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object conſtantly in view, the deſire of gain. This thought riſes with him every morning, and accompanies him at the cloſe of every day. Ideas of reputation can ſcarcely occur to give dignity to his purſuit; and he rarely hopes to give new improvement to the arts of exiſtence, or has the notion of improvement mixing itſelf with his thoughts. His whole mind is buried in the ſordid care of adding another guinea to his income.

The ideas of the diviſion of labour, and even of barter and ſale, firſt preſented themſelves, as conducive to mutual accommodation, not as the means of enabling one of the parties to impoſe an unequal ſhare of labour or a diſproportionate bargain upon the other. But they did not long remain in this degree of purity. The ſagacity of the human mind was ſoon whetted to employ theſe ideas, as the inſtruments of fraud and injuſtice.

Is it to be expected that any man will conſtantly reſiſt the temptations to injuſtice, which the exerciſe of a trade hourly ſuggeſts?

The buying and ſelling price of a commodity will always be different. If we purchaſe it of the manufacturer, he muſt not only be paid for the raw material, but for his induſtry and ſkill. If we buy it of the trader ſtrictly ſo called, he muſt

muſt be paid for his time, for the rent of his houſe, and for the ſubſiſtence of himſelf and his family. This difference of price muſt be left to his deliberation to adjuſt, and there is thus veſted in him a large diſcretionary power. Will he always uſe this diſcretion with perfect integrity?

Let us ſuppoſe that the price fixed by the trader is always an equitable one, for of that the generality of his cuſtomers are incompetent to judge. There is one thing that ſtands out groſsly to the eye, and reſpecting which there can be no diſpute: I mean, the ſervile and contemptible arts which we ſo frequently ſee played off by the tradeſman. He is ſo much in the habit of exhibiting a bended body, that he ſcarcely knows how to ſtand upright. Every word he utters is graced with a ſimper or a ſmile. He exhibits all the arts of the male coquette; not that he wiſhes his fair viſitor to fall in love with his perſon, but that he may induce her to take off his goods. An American ſavage, who ſhould witneſs the ſpectacle of a genteel and well frequented ſhop, would conceive its maſter to be the kindeſt creature in the world, overflowing with affection to all, and eager to contribute to every one's accommodation and happineſs. Alas, it is no ſuch thing! There is not a being on the face of the earth, with a heart more thoroughly purged

from every remnant of the weakneſs of benevolence and ſympathy. The ſole principle of all this fair outſide, is the conſideration how to make the moſt of every one that enters his ſhop.

Yet this being, this ſupple, fawning, cringing creature, this ſyſtematic, cold-hearted liar, this being, every moment of whoſe exiſtence is centred in the ſordid conſideration of petty gains, has the audacity to call himſelf a man. One half of all the human beings we meet, belong, in a higher or lower degree, to the claſs here delineated. In how perverted a ſtate of ſociety have we been deſtined to exiſt?

Nothing is more ſtriking than the eagerneſs with which tradeſmen endeavour to ſupplant each other. The hatred of courtiers, the jealouſy of artiſts, the rivalſhip of lovers attached to a common miſtreſs, ſcarcely go beyond the fierceneſs of their paſſions. The bitterneſs of their hatred, the impatience with which they think and ſpeak of each other, the innumerable arts by which they undermine a brother, conſtitute a memorable ſpectacle. There is nothing in which they ſo much rejoice, as in the ruin of an antagoniſt. They will ſell their goods at a loſs, and ſometimes ruin themſelves, in the attempt to accompliſh this wiſhed-for event.

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And for what is all this mighty contention, this unintermitted and unrelenting war? For the moſt poiſonous and ſoul-corrupting object, that can poſſibly engroſs a man's perſevering attention! For gain.

Shall I deſtine my child to the exerciſe of a trade? Shall I not rather almoſt wiſh that the cuſtom of antiquity were revived, and that I were permitted to expoſe my new-born infant to periſh with hunger, ſooner than reſerve him, that he may afterwards exhibit a ſpectacle that I cannot think of without moral loathing, and appear in a character that is the opprobrium of a rational nature?

From trades let us proceed to a review of profeſſions.

There is ſcarcely any profeſſion that obtains for a man a higher degree of conſideration in civil ſociety, than the profeſſion of the law.

Law, we are told, is that by which one man is ſecured againſt the injuſtice and the paſſions of others. It is an inflexible and impartial principle, holding out one ſtandard of right and wrong to all mankind. It has been deviſed by ſages, in the tranquillity of the cloſet, not to accommodate particular intereſts, but to provide for the welfare of the whole. Its view is ſublime and univerſal. It cannot be warped to

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ſuit temporary and perſonal objects. It teaches every man what he has to depend upon, not ſuffering him to be condemned at the caprice of his judges, but by maxims previouſly promulgated and made known to all. It gives fair warning to one party, of the puniſhment which a certain conduct will incur. It affords to the other party, a remedy againſt the uſurpation of his neighbour, known, definite, and univerſally acceſſible.

If law be, to this eminent extent, the benefactor and preſerver of mankind, muſt it not reflect ſome of its own luſtre upon its profeſſors? What character can be more venerable than an expounder of law, whether we apply this appellation to the judge who authoritatively declares its meaning from the bench, to the pleader who takes care to do juſtice to the caſe of a man who is unable to do juſtice to it himſelf, or to the leſs brilliant, but not leſs uſeful, functions of him, who from his chamber communicates the reſult of the reſearches of years, to the client, who would otherwiſe be unable to find his way amidſt the complexities of ſtatutes, gloſſes and precedents?

We will not here enquire into the ſoundneſs of the panegyric which has ſo often been pronounced upon the inſtitution of law. All that

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our preſent ſubject requires of us, is, to aſcertain what ſort of character the ſtudy of law is likely to entail upon its profeſſors.

The buſineſs of a man is to enquire into the dictates of reaſon and the principles of juſtice. The buſineſs of a lawyer is of a very different ſort. He has nothing to do with general and impartial reaſon; his concern is with edicts and acts of parliament. He is to conſider theſe as the ſtandards of right and wrong to mankind. He muſt either wholly expel from his mind all notions of independent inveſtigation; or he muſt ſubmit to the neceſſity of maintaining that to be right, becauſe it is conformable to law, which he knows to be wrong, becauſe it is irreconcilable to juſtice. What may be the general merits of law as an inſtitution would be a proper topic of ſeparate inveſtigation *. But thus much is too plain to need any profound elucidation: that laws, in their great outline, are uſually the prejudices of a barbarous age artificially kept alive and entailed upon a civiliſed one; that ſuch of them as are of long ſtanding, derive their character from principles and ſyſtems that have ſince been wholly exploded and brought into diſuſe; that ſuch of

* See this queſtion conſidered, in Political Juſtice, Book VII, Chap. VIII, octavo edition.

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them as are of recent date, have too often originated in temporary objects, in antiſocial paſſions, in the intemperate deſire of giving ſtrength to monopoly, and firmneſs to the uſurpation of the few over the many. From this immenſe and heterogeneous maſs the lawyer extracts his code of ethics; and nothing is more uſual among perſons of this profeſſion, than to ſee them expreſſing their ſenſations by a look of aſtoniſhment and contempt, if they hear a man arraigning the infallibility of law, and calling in queſtion the juſtice of its deciſions.

The ſalutary condition of the human mind, is that in which it is prepared to bring every principle upon which it proceeds, within the ſcope of its own examination; to derive aſſiſtance from every means of information, oral or ſcriptory; but to admit nothing, upon the ſcore of authority, to limit or ſuperſede the touchſtone of reaſon. If I would underſtand what is juſtice, if I would eſtimate the means of human happineſs, if I would judge truly of the conduct of my neighbour, or know rightly how to faſhion my own, I muſt enquire deeply, not ſuperficially: I muſt enter into the principles of things, and not ſuffer concluſions to ſteal upon me unawares. I muſt proceed ſtep by ſtep; and then there will be ſome chance that the notions

notions I form, will be found in themſelves, and harmonious with each other.

But, when, inſtead of adopting my opinions with this degree of caution and deliberation, I am induced to admit at a ſtroke whole volumes of propoſitions as unappealable and deciſive, I reſign the moſt beneficial prerogative of human underſtanding.

This expedient, inſtead of ſhortening my courſe, multiplies my difficulties a thouſand fold. When I propoſed only to conſult the volume of nature, I knew to a certain degree what was the taſk I undertook. All the evidence I collected, bore immediately upon the point under conſideration. But now the principal point becomes involved with innumerable ſubordinate ones. I have no longer merely to be ſatisfied, by a long or a compendious courſe, what it is that is abſolutely right. I am concerned with the conſtruction of phraſes; the removal of ambiguities; the reconciling contradictions; the aſcertaining the mind of the compoſer; and for this purpoſe the conſulting hiſtory, the aſcertaining the occaſion of inſtitutions, and even the collecting as far as poſſible every anecdote that relates to their origin. I am concerned with commentators, as I am concerned with the text, not merely to aſſiſt my

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own deductions, but becauſe they have a certain authority ſettering and enchaining my deductions. I ſought, it may be, repoſe for my indolence; but I have found an eternal labour. I have exchanged a taſk comparatively eaſy, for difficulties unconquerable and endleſs.

Such is the mode in which a lawyer forms his creed. It is neceſſarily captious and technical, pregnant with petty ſubtleties and unmeaning diſtinctions. But the evil does not ſtop here. It would be a miſtake peculiarly glaring and groſs to ſuppoſe that a lawyer ſtudies the law principally that he may underſtand it. No; his great object is to puzzle and perplex. His chief attention is given to the enquiry, how he may diſtort the law ſo as to ſuit the cauſe in which he is engaged. This is a neceſſary conſequence of one man's being hired to tell another man's ſtory for him. The principal, however erroneous, may be expected to expreſs himſelf with good faith. The agent is careleſs himſelf about the merits of the cauſe. It is totally indifferent to him whether his client be right or wrong. He will plead for the plaintiff today, and, if properly applied to, will plead on the oppoſite ſide in another court tomorrow. He ſtands up before a judge and jury in the moſt important queſtions, upon which the peace of

families, and the lives and liberties of individuals depend. If he have an honeſt tale to deliver, it is well. But, if he have the weaker ſide, what he undertakes is, by a ſolemn and public argument, to miſlead and confound, if he is able, the court and the jury. He juſtifies this to himſelf: for, if men are to have their cauſe pleaded by others, the greateſt delinquent is entitled to the ſame privilege; to reject his application would be to prejudge his cauſe, and to withhold from him that to which all men are entitled, a ſolemn and public hearing. The lawyer is weak enough not to ſee the conſequences of his practice: he does not know that, by this ſerious trifling, pleading indifferently on either ſide or on both, he brings all profeſſions and integrity into diſcredit, and totally ſubverts the firmneſs and diſcernment of his own underſtanding.

Another circumſtance common to the lawyer with all thoſe profeſſions which ſubſiſt upon the misfortunes of mankind, is that he labours under a perpetual temptation to increaſe thoſe misfortunes. The glorious uncertainty of the law is his daily boaſt. Nothing ſo much conduces to his happineſs, as that his neighbours ſhould be perpetually engaged in broils and contention. Innumerable are the diſputes that would

would ſoon terminate in an amicable adjuſtment, were it not for the lawyer, who, like an evil genius, broods over the miſchief and hatches it into a ſuit. There may be inſtances in which he adopts an oppoſite conduct. But no father would wiſh for a child, no prudent man would chooſe for himſelf, a ſituation in which he was perpetually expoſed to ſuch enticements. Where ſuch is the character of a profeſſion, it cannot fail to happen, that the majority of its adherents will be ſeduced from their integrity.

The concluding part of theſe obſervations will apply alſo to the phyſician. Pain, ſickneſs and anguiſh are his harveſt. He rejoices to hear that they have fallen upon any of his acquaintance. He looks blank and diſconſolate, when all men are at their eaſe. The fantaſtic valetudinarian is particularly his prey. He liſtens to his frivolous tale of ſymptoms with inflexible gravity. He pretends to be moſt wiſe, when he is moſt ignorant. No matter whether he underſtand any thing of the diſeaſe; there is one thing in which his viſit muſt inevitably terminate, a preſcription. How many arts have been invented to extract ore from the credulity of mankind? The regular and the quack have each their ſeveral ſchemes of impoſition, and they differ in nothing ſo much as in the name.

Let us paſs from the phyſician to the divine.

I am almoſt tempted to diſmiſs this part of my ſubject with the exclamation of Cato, *De Carthagine ſatius eſt ſilere quam parcius dicere:* It is better to be ſilent on this head, than to treat it in a ſlight and inadequate manner. We will not however paſs it over without a remark.

A clergyman is a man educated for a certain profeſſion; and, having been ſo educated, he cannot, without much inconvenience, exchange it for another. This is a circumſtance indeed to which his purſuit is expoſed in common with every other walk and diſtribution of human life. But the evil that reſults to him from this circumſtance, has its peculiar aggravations.

It is the ſingularity of his office, that its duties principally conſiſt in the inculcating certain opinions. Theſe duties cannot properly be diſcharged, without an education, and, in ſome degree, a life, of ſtudy. It is ſurely a ſtrange and anomalous ſpecies of exiſtence, where a man's days are to be ſpent in ſtudy, with this condition annexed, that he muſt abſtain from enquiry. Yet abſtain he muſt, for he has entered into a previous engagement, expreſs or implied, what his opinions ſhall be through the courſe of his life. This is incompatible with any thing that deſerves the name of enquiry. He that really enquires,

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can by no means foreſee in what concluſions his enquiry ſhall terminate.

One of two conſequences is eſpecially to be apprehended by a man under theſe circumſtances.

He will perhaps arrive at ſceptical or incredulous concluſions, in ſpite of all the bias impreſſed upon him at once by pecuniary conſiderations, and by the fear of loſing the friendſhip and admiration of thoſe, to whom his habits perhaps had chiefly attached him, and who were the principal ſolace of his exiſtence. In that caſe he muſt determine for the reſt of his life, either to play a ſolemn farce of hypocriſy, or, unleſs his talents be conſiderable, to maintain his integrity at the expence of an obſcure and ſolitary exiſtence.

The infidelity however of a ſtudious and conſcientious clergyman is perhaps a rare circumſtance. It more frequently happens, that he lives in the midſt of evidence, and is inſenſible to it. He is in the daily contemplation of contradictions, and finds them conſiſtent. He reads ſtories the moſt fabulous and abſurd, and is filled with the profoundeſt reverence. He liſtens to arguments that would impreſs conviction upon every impartial hearer, and is aſtoniſhed at their

futility. He receives a ſyſtem with the moſt perfect ſatisfaction, that a reflecting ſavage would infallibly ſcoff at for its groſſneſs and impertinence. He never dares truſt himſelf to one unprejudiced contemplation. He ſtarts with impatience and terror from its poſſible reſult. By long habits of intellectual ſlavery, he has learned to bear the yoke without a murmur. His thoughts are under ſuch perfect diſcipline that not a doubt ever ventures to intrude itſelf. That ſuch ſhould be the character of an ignorant and a weak man, need not ſurpriſe us; but that it ſhould equally ſuit men of the profoundeſt learning and the moſt elevated talents, is indeed a matter of ſurpriſe and regret.

A ſecond diſadvantage incident to the clerical profeſſion is the conſtant appearance of ſanctity, which a clergyman, ambitious of profeſſional character, is obliged to maintain. His ſanctity does not riſe immediately from ſpiritual motives and the ſentiments of the heart; it is a certain exterior which he finds himſelf compelled to preſerve. His devotion is not the reſult of devout feelings; he is obliged equally to affect them, when he experiences them leaſt. Hence there is always ſomething formal and uncouth in the manners of a reputable clergyman. It cannot

be otherwiſe. His continual attention to a pious exterior, neceſſarily gives a conſtrained and artificial ſeeming to his carriage.

A third circumſtance diſadvantageouſly affecting the character of a clergyman, ariſes from his ſituation as a guide and teacher to others. He harangues his auditory at ſtated periods, and no one is allowed to contradict him. He occupies the moſt eminent ſituation in the building appropriated to public worſhip. He pronounces the prayers of the congregation, and ſeems to act the mediator between the Creator and his creatures. It is his office to viſit the ſick, and to officiate as an oracle to ſuch as are in diſtreſs. The taſk principally incumbent upon him, is to govern the thoughts of his pariſhioners, and to reſtrain the irregular ſallies of their underſtandings. He is placed as a champion to reſiſt the incroachments of hereſy and infidelity. Upon his ſucceſs in this reſpect depends the proſperity of the church of which he is a pillar. He warns his flock againſt innovation and intrepidity of thinking. The adverſary is ſilent before him. With other men I may argue; but, if I attempt to diſcuſs a ſubject freely and impartially with him, it is conſtrued a perſonal inſult. I ought to have known that all his ſchemes and proſpects depended upon the perennial ſtationarineſs of his

underſtanding. Thus the circumſtances of every day tend to confirm in him a dogmatical, imperious, illiberal and intolerant character.

Such are the leading features of the character which, in moſt inſtances, we muſt expect to find in a reputable clergyman. He will be timid in enquiry, prejudiced in opinion, cold, formal, the ſlave of what other men may think of him, rude, dictatorial, impatient of contradiction, harſh in his cenſures, and illiberal in his judgments. Every man may remark in him ſtudy rendered abortive, artificial manners, infantine prejudices, and a ſort of arrogant infallibility.

It is not unfrequent indeed to find clergymen of a character different from this. Men go into the church from convenience, and becauſe a living lies within their reach to obtain. Theſe men are often diſſipated and ignorant. They pretend to no extraordinary orthodoxy or devotion. They diſcharge the functions of their office in a ſlight and careleſs manner, merely becauſe they muſt be diſcharged. They are devoted to the ſports of the field, or the concerns of ordinary life.

Theſe men will probably appear to a juſt obſerver leſs reſpectable than the claſs previouſly deſcribed. They are conſcious of aſſuming a deſcription to which they do not belong, and the

delicacy

delicacy of their mind is evidently blunted. There is a ſort of coarſeneſs in their character, ariſing from the attempt to laugh away a ſtigma, the exiſtence of which they can never entirely forget. Nothing is more contemptible than a man who is only known by his adherence to a profeſſion, of which he has none of the virtues, the induſtry, the ſkill, and the generous ambition. He belongs properly to no claſs of beings, and is a mere abortion and blot upon the face of the earth.

Another profeſſion which has been thought not leſs honourable than that of the lawyer or the divine, is that of the ſoldier.

A diſtinction has ſometimes been made between thoſe lawyers, who take up the profeſſion *bona fide*, and pretend never to engage in a cauſe but ſo far as it is conformable to their own ſentiments; and the lawyers who reaſon themſelves into the propriety of diſmiſſing their perſonal feelings and opinions when they come into a court of juſtice, and, in conſequence, of pleading any cauſe, indifferent as to their own idea of its ſoundneſs. A ſimilar diſtinction may be applied to the ſoldier.

A ſoldier who will never fight but in a cauſe that he ſhall conſcientiouſly and ſcrupulouſly adjudge

adjudge to be good, can ſcarcely be a ſoldier by profeſſion.

But, to diſmiſs this conſideration, it is no enviable circumſtance that a man ſhould be deſtined to maintain the good cauſe by blows and fighting. In this reſpect, aſſuming the propriety of corporal puniſhments, he is upon a par with the beadle and the executioner. To employ murder as the means of juſtice, is an idea that a man of enlightened mind will not dwell upon with pleaſure. To march forth in rank and file, with all the pomp of ſtreamers and trumpets, for the purpoſe of ſhooting at our fellow-men as at a mark, to inflict upon them all the variety of wounds and anguiſh, to leave them weltering in their blood, to wander over the field of deſolation, and count the number of the dying and the dead, are employments which in theſis we may maintain to be neceſſary, but which no good man will contemplate with gratulation and delight. A battle, we will ſuppoſe, is won. Thus truth is eſtabliſhed; thus the cauſe of juſtice is confirmed! It ſurely requires no common ſagacity, to diſcern the connection between this immenſe heap of calamities, and the aſſertion of truth, or the maintenance of juſtice.

It is worſe where the ſoldier hires himſelf, not for

for the ſervice of any portion or diſtribution of mankind, but for the mere purpoſe of fighting. He leaves it to his employer and his king to determine the juſtice of the cauſe; his buſineſs is to obey. He has no duty but that of murder; and this duty he is careful amply to diſcharge. This he regards as the means of his ſubſiſtence, or as the path that leads to an illuſtrious name.

A ſoldier, upon every ſuppoſition, muſt learn ferocity. When he would aſſert the cauſe of truth, he thinks not of arguments, but of blows. His mind is familiariſed to the moſt dreadful ſpectacles. He is totally ignorant of the principles of human nature; and is ridiculous enough to ſuppoſe that a man can be in the right, who is attempted to be made ſo through the medium of compulſion.

But, though it could be imagined that coercion was the means of making men wiſe and good, this aſſumption, large as it is, would not ſerve to eſtabliſh the morality of war. War ſtrikes not at the offender, but the innocent.

Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi *. HOR.

Kings and miniſters of ſtate, the real authors of

* When doating Monarchs urge
Unſound Reſolves, their Subjects feel the Scourge.
FRANCIS.

the

the calamity, ſit unmoleſted in their cabinet, while thoſe againſt whom the fury of the ſtorm is directed, are, for the moſt part, perſons who have been trepanned into the ſervice, or who are dragged unwillingly from their peaceful homes into the field of battle. A ſoldier is a man whoſe buſineſs it is to kill thoſe who never offended him, and who are the innocent martyrs of other men's iniquities. Whatever may become of the abſtract queſtion of the juſtifiableneſs of war, it ſeems impoſſible that a ſoldier ſhould not be a depraved and unnatural being.

To theſe more ſerious and momentous conſiderations, it may be proper to add a recollection of the ridiculouſneſs of the military character. Its firſt conſtituent is obedience. A ſoldier is of all deſcriptions of men the moſt completely a machine. Yet his profeſſion inevitably teaches him ſomething of dogmatiſm, ſwaggering and ſelf-conſequence. He is like the puppet of a ſhowman, who, at the very time he is made to ſtrut, and ſwell, and diſplay the moſt farcical airs, we perfectly know cannot aſſume the moſt inſignificant geſture, advance either to the right or the left, but as he is moved by the exhibitor. This ſingular ſituation gives to the military a correſpondent ſingularity of manner. The lofty port of a generous ſpirit, flowing from a conſciouſneſs

of

of merit and independence, has always ſomething in it of grand and impreſſive. But the ſwagger of a ſoldier, which it coſts him an inceſſant effort to ſupport, is better calculated, in a diſcerning ſpectator, to produce laughter, than to excite awe.

The ſailor, if he is to come into the liſt of profeſſions, ſo far as his character is warlike, falls under the ſame objections as the ſoldier, with this aggravation of the nature of his purſuits, that they uſurp an element which, by itſelf, man is ſcarcely able to ſubdue, and compound a ſcene ſtill more infernal, than that of a battle to be decided by land.

Where the ſailor is not a military character, he is frequently a mercantile one, and the merits of mercantile purſuits have already been eſtimated.

But he labours under one diſadvantage peculiar to himſelf. He paſſes his exiſtence in a ſtate of baniſhment from his ſpecies. The man who is ſentenced to reſide in New Holland or Siberia, may improve his faculties, and unfold his affections. Not ſo the man who paſſes his life in a coop, like a fowl ſet apart to be fatted. Men, accuſtomed to ſpeculate upon the varieties of human nature, can have no conception, previous to the experiment, of the ignorance of a

ſailor. Of the concerns of men, their purſuits, their paſſions, all that agitates their mind and engroſſes their attention, he is almoſt as uninformed, as an inhabitant of the remoteſt planet. Thoſe expanſive affections, that open the human ſoul, and cauſe one man to identify himſelf with the pleaſure and pains of his fellows, are to him like the dialects of Nineveh or Carthage. And what renders the abortiveneſs of his character the more glaring, he has viſited all countries, and has ſeen none. He goes on ſhore for half an hour at a time, and advances half a mile up the province upon which he anchors. If he return in the cloſe of life to his native village, he finds himſelf unſpeakably outſtripped in ſagacity and knowledge, by the poor peaſant, whoſe remoteſt reſearches have never led him further than to a country-wake or a neighbouring fair.

It is to be remembered that, through this whole diſquiſition, we have been examining different profeſſions and employments, under the notion of their being objects for the contemplation of a man, who would chooſe a deſtination for himſelf or his child. Our buſineſs therefore lay entirely with their general tendency. If there be any extraordinary characters, that have eſcaped the prevailing contagion it has been our purpoſe to detect, they have no right to be offended.

offended. Let not truth however be ſacrificed to a wiſh to conciliate. If a man have eſcaped, he muſt be of a character truly extraordinary and memorable. And even ſuch a man will not have paſſed entirely uncontaminated. He will bear upon him the ſtamp of his occupation, ſome remnants of the reigning obliquity, though he ſhall be fortunate enough to have redeemed them by virtues illuſtrious and ſublime.

Thus then we have ſucceſſively reviewed the manners of the trader, the lawyer, the phyſician, and the divine, together with the military and naval profeſſions. We propoſed to aſcertain which of theſe avocations a wiſe man would adopt for a regular employment for himſelf or his child; and, though the reſult will be found perhaps to contribute little to the enlightening his choice, but rather to have caſt the gloom of ſtrong diſapprobation upon all, we may however conſole ourſelves at leaſt with this reflection, that, while engaged in the enquiry, we have ſurveyed a conſiderable portion of the occupations and characters of men in ſociety, and put together materials which may aſſiſt our judgment reſpecting the economy of human life.

ESSAY

ESSAY VI.

OF SELF-DENIAL.

THE greateſt of all human benefits, that at leaſt without which no other benefit can be truly enjoyed, is independence.

He who lives upon the kindneſs of another, muſt always have a greater or leſs portion of a ſervile ſpirit. He has not yet come to feel what man is. He has not yet eſſayed the muſcles of his mind, and obſerved the ſublimity of his nature. True energy, the ſelf-conſcious dignity of the man, who thinks not of himſelf otherwiſe than he ought to think, but enjoys in ſober perception the certainty of his faculties, are ſentiments to which he is a ſtranger. He knows not what ſhall happen tomorrow, for his reſources are out of himſelf. But the man that is not provided for tomorrow, cannot enjoy today. He muſt either have a trembling apprehenſion of ſublunary viciſſitude, or he muſt be indebted for his repoſe to the lethargy of his ſoul.

The queſtion relative to the eſtabliſhment and maintenance of independence, is intimately connected

nected with the queſtion relative to our taſte for, and indulgence in, the luxuries of human life.

Various are the opinions that have been held upon the latter of theſe topics.

One of theſe opinions has been carried to its furtheſt extreme by certain ſects of religioniſts.

Their doctrine is commonly known by the appellation of ſelf-denial. The poſtulate upon which it principally proceeds, is that of the ſuperiority of the mind to the body. There is an obvious diſtinction between intellectual pleaſures and ſenſible ones. Either of them taken in any great degree, tends to exclude the other. The man who is engroſſed in contemplation, will, without expreſsly intending it, ſomewhat macerate his body. The man who ſtudies without reſtraint the gratifications of appetite, will be in danger of loſing the activity of his mind, the delicacy of his intellectual tact, and the generoſity of his ſpirit.

There muſt be a ſuperiority in favour, either of intellectual pleaſures, or of ſenſible ones. But that man's mind muſt ſurely be of an unfortunate conſtruction, who can heſitate to prefer the former to the latter. That which we poſſeſs in common with the brutes, is not of ſo great value,

as that which we poſſeſs diſtinctively to ourſelves. That man muſt poſſeſs the ſureſt, the moſt extenſive and the moſt refined ſources of happineſs, whoſe intellect is cultivated with ſcience, and purified by taſte, is warmed with the ardour of genius, and exalted by a ſpirit of liberality and benevolence. There can be no compariſon between this man, and the glutton, the epicure or the debauchee *.

The inference drawn from theſe premiſes by the perſons whoſe ſyſtem we are here conſidering, is as follows. Senſible pleaſures are to be avoided, when they tend to impair the corporeal faculties. They are to be avoided when they tend to the injury of our neighbours, or are calculated to produce in ourſelves habits of ſtratagem and deceit. Thus far all ſyſtems of morality and rational conduct are agreed. But the preachers of ſelf-denial add to theſe limitations, a prohibition to the frequent indulgence of ſenſible pleaſures, from the danger of ſuffering ourſelves, to ſet too great a value upon them, and to poſtpone the beſt and moſt elevated, to the meaneſt, part of our natures.

Having aſſumed this new principle of limitation, there is no viſionary and repulſive extreme to which theſe ſectaries have not in ſome in-

* Political Juſtice, Book IV, Chap. XI, octavo edition.

ſtances

ſtances proceeded. They have regarded all ſenſible pleaſure as a deduction from the purity and dignity of the mind, and they have not abſtained from invective againſt intellectual pleaſure itſelf. They have taught men to court perſecution and calamity. They have delighted to plant thorns in the path of human life. They have repreſented ſorrow, anguiſh and mortification as the ornaments and honour of our exiſtence. They have preached the vanity and emptineſs of all earthly things, and have maintained that it was unworthy of a good man and a wiſe to feel complacency in any of the ſenſations they can afford.

Theſe notions may ſufficiently accord with the ſyſtem of thoſe who are willing to part with all the benefits of the preſent ſcene of exiſtence, in exchange for certain ſpeculations upon the chances of a world to come. But they cannot enter into any liberal and enlightened ſyſtem of morality. Pleaſure or happineſs is the ſole end of morality. A leſs pleaſure is not to be bartered but for a greater, either to ourſelves or others, nor a ſcheme attended with the certainty or probability of conſiderable pleaſure for an air-built ſpeculation.

Diſmiſſing therefore theſe extravagant dogmas, it remains to enquire how far we ought to

ſacrifice or reſtrain the empire of ſenſible pleaſures, for the ſake of contributing to the ſubſtantial improvement of the better part of our nature.

There are obvious reaſons why this reſtraint is not to be too ſeverely impoſed.

It is a miſtake to ſuppoſe that ſenſible pleaſures and intellectual ones are by any means incompatible. He that would have great energy, cannot perhaps do better than to buſy himſelf in various directions, and to cultivate every part of his nature. Man is a little world within himſelf, and every portion of that world is entitled to attention. A wiſe man would wiſh to have a ſound body, as well as a ſound mind. He would wiſh to be a man at all points. For this purpoſe he would exerciſe and ſtrengthen the muſcles of every part of his frame. He would prepare his body to endure hardſhip and viciſſitude. He would exerciſe his digeſtic powers. He would cultivate the delicacy of the organs of taſte. He would not neglect the ſenſations, the aſſociations, and the involuntary proceſſes and animal economy annexed to the commerce of the ſexes. There is a harmony and a ſympathy through every part of the human machine. A vigorous and animated tone of body contributes to the advantage of the intellect,

intellect, and an improved ſtate of intellect heightens and refines our ſenſible pleaſures. A modern phyſician of great character *, has maintained life to be an unnatural ſtate, and death the genuine condition of man. If this theſis is to be admitted, it ſeems to follow, that true wiſdom would direct us to that proceeding, which tended moſt to inform with life, and to maintain in activity, every portion of our frame and every branch of our nature. It is thus that we ſhall moſt effectually counterwork an enemy who is ever in wait for us.

Another argument in favour of a certain degree of attention to be paid to, and cultivation to be beſtowed upon, ſenſible pleaſures, is, that the ſenſations of our animal frame make an important part of the materials of our knowledge. It is from ſenſe that we muſt derive thoſe images which ſo eminently elucidate every department of ſcience. One of the great objects both of natural ſcience and morality, is to judge of our ſenſible impreſſions. The man who had not yielded a due attention to them, would in vain attempt to form an enlightened judgment in the very queſtion we are here attempting to diſcuſs. There is a vaſt variety of topics that he would be diſqualified to treat of or to eſtimate.

* Brown.

Add to this, that all our refined and abſtracted notions are compounded from ideas of ſenſe. There is nothing ſo elevated and pure, but it was indebted to this ſource for its materials. He therefore who would obtain vividneſs in his ideas of intellect, ought probably to maintain with care the freſhneſs and vigour of his ideas of ſenſe.

It ſeems to be owing to this that we find, for the moſt part, the ruſtic, ſlow of apprehenſion, and unſuſceptible of diſcernment; while it is only from the man who maintains, not only the health of his body, but the delicacy and vividneſs of his corporeal tact, that we ordinarily expect delicacy of taſte, brilliancy of imagination, or profoundneſs of intellectual diſcuſſion.

Having endeavoured to aſcertain the benefits to be derived from delicacy and activity in our external ſenſes, let us recur to the direct part of the queſtion, how far the improvement of the better part of our nature, demands from us a ſacrifice of, or a reſtraint to be impoſed on, ſenſible pleaſure.

In the firſt place, if, as we have already endeavoured to prove, intellectual pleaſures are entitled to a preference over ſenſible ones, they are of courſe alſo entitled to be firſt conſidered in the arrangement of our time, and to occupy the choiceſt

choiceſt part of our life. Nothing can be more contemptible, than the man who dedicates all the energies of his mind to the indulgence of his appetites. They may, comparatively ſpeaking, if we may be allowed the expreſſion, be thruſt up in a corner, and yet enjoy ſcope enough for every valuable purpoſe. It is more neceſſary that we ſhould not proſcribe them, than that we ſhould make them one of the eminent purſuits of our lives.

Secondly, we ought not only to confine them within limits conſiderably narrow, as to the time they ſhould occupy, but ſhould alſo be careful that they do not confound and inebriate our underſtandings. This is indeed neceſſary, in order to the keeping them in due ſubordination in the reſpect laſt mentioned. If they be not held in ſubjection as to their place in our thoughts, they will ſpeedily uſurp upon all other ſubjects, and convert the mind into a ſcene of tumult and confuſion. Intellectual and elevated purſuits demand from us a certain calmneſs of temper; that the mind ſhould reſt upon its proper centre, that it ſhould look round with ſteadineſs and freedom, that it ſhould be undiſturbed by the intruſion of thoughts foreign to the preſent object of its attention, and that it ſhould be capable of a ſevere and obſtinate inveſtigation of the point under review.

A further reaſon for moderation in our appetite for ſenſible pleaſure, not leſs important than any other that can poſſibly be aſſigned, is that which was alluded to in the commencement of this eſſay, the preſervation of our independence.

The man who is anxious to maintain his independence, ought ſteadily to bear in mind how few are the wants of a human being. It is by our wants that we are held down, and linked in a thouſand ways, to human ſociety. They render the man who is devoted to them, the ſlave of every creature that breathes. They make all the difference between the hero and the coward. The man of true courage is he who, when duty and public good demand it, can chearfully diſpenſe with innumerable gratifications. The coward is he who, wedded to particular indulgences and a certain mode of life, is not able ſo much as to think with equanimity of the being deprived of them.

Hunc ſolem, et ſtellas, & decedentia certis
Tempora momentis, ſunt qui, formidine nulla
Imbuti, ſpectent *. HOR.

* This vault of air, this congregated ball,
Self-center'd ſun, and ſtars that riſe and fall,
There are, my friend! whoſe philoſophic eyes
Look thro',——
And view this dreadful All without a fear.
POPE.

Such

Such undoubtedly is the characteriſtic of genuine virtue. It teaches us to look upon events, not abſolutely with indifference, but at leaſt with tranquillity. It inſtructs us to enjoy the benefits which we have, and prepares us for what is to follow. It ſmiles upon us in the midſt of poverty and adverſe circumſtances. It enables us to collect and combine the comforts which a juſt obſerver may extract from the moſt untoward ſituation, and to be content.

The weakneſs which too many are ſubject to in regard to the goods of fortune, puts them to a certain degree in every man's power. It is of little conſequence how virtuous may be a man's perſonal inclinations, if he be inordinately ſenſible to the preſence or abſence of the accommodations and luxuries of life. This man is not his own maſter. If he have not been ſeduced to the commiſſion of baſe and diſhonourable actions, he may thank accident for his eſcape, not the ſtrength of his virtue. He is truly a ſlave. Any man, poſſeſſing the command of a certain portion of the goods of life, may order him this way or that at his pleaſure. He is like thoſe brute animals, that are allured to the learning innumerable poſtures and ridiculous tricks, by the attraction of a morſel of meat. He knows not whether he ſhall end his life with

a virtue,

a virtue, plauſible, hollow, and ever on the brink of diſſolution; or whether, on the contrary, his character ſhall be hated and contemned, as long as his ſtory endures.

He that deſires to be virtuous, and to remain ſo, muſt learn to be content with a little; to uſe the recreations of ſenſe for the purpoſes of living, and not to live for the ſake of theſe recreations.

Summum credet *nefas animam præferre pudori,*
*Et propter vitam vivendi perdere cauſas**. JUV.

How far then is it requiſite that he, who would not be the ſlave of appetite, ſhould rigidly reſtrain himſelf in the indulgence of appetite?

There have been men who, living in the midſt of luxury and inordinate indulgence, have yet, when an adequate occaſion preſented itſelf to rouſe their virtue, ſhown that they were ſuperior to theſe trivial acceſſories of human life, and that they could ſtoop with a chearful ſpirit to calamity and penury.

He however, who would deſire to have reaſon to depend upon his fortitude, ought not proba-

* He'd rather chuſe
To guard his Honour, and his Life to loſe,
Rather than let his Virtue be betray'd;
Virtue, the Noble Cauſe for which he's made.
STEPNEY.

bly

bly to expoſe himſelf to ſo doubtful an experiment. It has often happened that thoſe who, in the outſet of their career, have been full of a gallant ſpirit, have been inſenſibly ſubdued by a courſe of unexpected gratification. There is ſomething particularly dangerous in this ſituation. The man remembers with how much chearfulneſs he formerly ſubmitted to inconvenience, and he does not feel, and cannot perſuade himſelf, that he is worſe than he was. He does not advert to the way in which luxury is undermining all the energies of his ſoul. He does not ſee that it is twining itſelf about his heart, and will not be torn away but with life. This is unfortunately one of the peculiar characteriſtics of degeneracy, that it invades us in a ſecret and crafty manner, and is leſs eaſily perceived by its victim, than by the leaſt ſagacious of the byſtanders.

ESSAY

ESSAY VII.

OF PERSONAL REPUTATION.

SECT. I.

FEW ſpeculations can be more intereſting than that which relates to the truth or falſhood of the ordinary ſtandard of morality.

The juſt and ſound ſtandard of morality is eaſily aſſigned. The firſt object of virtue is to contribute to the welfare of mankind. The moſt eſſential attribute of right conduct therefore is, that it ſhall have a beneficent and ſalutary tendency. One further characteriſtic it is uſual to add. Men, in the exerciſe of their rational faculties, are influenced by motives and inducements apprehended by the intellect. The more a man is incited to an action by reflecting on the abſolute nature of that action, the more ground of expectation he affords of a repetition of ſuch actions. We do not therefore conſider ourſelves as authoriſed to denominate an action virtuous, unleſs

unleſs it ſpring from kind and beneficent intentions *.

Theſe two circumſtances taken together, conſtitute every thing that can reaſonably be included in the term virtue. A beneficent action to which a man is incited by a knowledge of its beneficent tendency, is an act of virtue. The man who is in the frequent practice of ſuch actions, is a worthy, virtuous and excellent man.

The ordinary ſtandard of morality is different from that which is here aſſigned.

Common obſervers divide the whole human ſpecies into two claſſes, the honeſt and the diſhoneſt.

Honeſty, according to their idea, conſiſts in the following particulars.

Firſt, a certain regularity of conduct not deviating into any thing too queſtionable for vulgar underſtandings to explain, nor into any thing notoriouſly mean and abject. Vulgar and undiſcriminating judges of morality, love thoſe things that preſerve a certain level, and abhor every thing that is calculated to ſtartle and ſurpriſe. This ſort of exhibition produces in them, more ſtrongly than any other mode of conduct, the effect of uniformity and harmony, and has an

* Political Juſtice, Book II, Chap. IV, octavo edition.

uncommon

uncommon degree of ſpecioufneſs and beauty to their apprehenſion.

It is of courſe requiſite to this notion of common honeſty that there ſhould be a certain portion of beneficent operation, towards friends and neighbours. This however is not rigidly required, or to any conſiderable extent. Where regularity is perceived, beneficent operation is ordinarily preſumed; nor do moderation and mediocrity perhaps ever fail of their tribute of applauſe. The idea of honeſty we are here delineating, ſcarcely looks beyond a very limited circle, unleſs the perſon to whom it is aſcribed, abſolutely occupy a public ſtation.

It is further requiſite to this ſpecies of honeſty, that that plauſibility of conduct, which conſtitutes the ground of its being aſcribed to a man, ſhould at no time of his life be belied, by actions which may ſeem to indicate, that this ſpecious appearance was connected with motives deciſively flagitious. The idea that a man is actuated by a Machiavelian ſpirit, and that his ſeeming virtues proceed only from a baſe deſign to miſlead mankind, is fatal to his character for common honeſty.

Laſtly, it is alſo neceſſary to common honeſty, and that for the ſame reaſon, the importance of a ſu-

a ſuperficial plauſibility, that the man to whom it is attributed, ſhall have a moderately good opinion of himſelf, and that he ſhall not heſitate, in his own private and perſonal judgment, to pronounce himſelf virtuous; which is perhaps very poſſible, when his pretenſions to that character are neither great, nor unqueſtionable.

All perſons, whoſe character does not fall within theſe conditions, are by the vulgar, either openly decided, or ſilently ſuſpected, to be diſhoneſt.

Having conſidered common honeſty affirmatively, let us examine it in another point of view, and regard it in a negative light. In other words, let us review a few of thoſe good qualities, the privation of which is by no means deſtructive of a character for common honeſty.

In the firſt place, it ſeems by no means to require benevolence as an ingredient in its compoſition. The extent of its demand in this reſpect is the abſence of malice, of a tyrannical and hateful diſpoſition.

One of the motives with which, even in deſcription and panegyric, it is moſt frequently connected, is a regard to the rule of right and the reaſon of things. This has ſometimes been carried ſo far, as to ſuggeſt to us the idea of a perſon, indifferent to other men's pleaſures and pains,

and regarding their predilections as objects beneath his attention. Right is the ſole object of his preference; and, provided that which he calls right be maintained, he is unmoved by the ſlighter conſideration, of the miſery of his ſpecies, or the deſtruction of a world. This idea, when ſtripped of the ranting and pompous words in which it has been enveloped, ſeems to be that of an excluſive regard to one's own integrity and conſiſtency, to the utter neglect of every generous ſentiment, and of all thoſe things, to a connection with which integrity and conſiſtency are indebted for their value.

A certain coldneſs of character ſeems indeed to be eſſential to that ſpecies of honeſty which is moſt applauded in the world. The alliance which ſubſiſts between a ſober and vigilant plauſibility on the one hand, and an impenetrable temper on the other, is plainly to be diſcerned. Honeſty, taken in this ſenſe, is a ſort of nonductor to all the ſympathies of the human heart. The men, whoſe character we are here attempting to deſcribe, are not ſubject to the fervours and the ſhocks of humanity. A ſmile of ſelf-complacency for the moſt part takes up its reſidence upon their viſage. To ordinary obſervers indeed they frequently appear uncommonly in earneſt; but their zeal, ſuch as it is, is diſtin-

guiſhed rather by verboſity than animation, and impreſſes us rather by weight of phraſe, than by that glowing and happy diction which feeling is prone to inſpire.

The habitual motive therefore of the man to whom the world excluſively awards the praiſe of common honeſty, may be emphatically ſelfiſh.

It may be vanity, conducing indeed in ſome degree to the good of others, but unmixed with almoſt any diſcernible portion of ſympathy or kindneſs. The regularity which conſtitutes its characteriſtical feature, may be principally owing to a ſort of pride of ſoul, which, while its regards are excluſively centred at home, will not permit the perſon in whom it exiſts, to do any thing that might afford materials for ridicule, or opportunity for cenſure.

The motive may be ambition, cautious of admitting any thing that ſhould operate as a bar to its claims. The object of its unremitted attention may be to exhibit its moſt ſmooth and gloſſy ſurface, deſirous either of being miſtaken for ſomewhat more excellent than it is; or, which is more probable, confuſed and doubtful in its judgment of itſelf, it ſeeks the ſuffrage of the world, to confirm it in its propenſity to inordinate ſelf-admiration.

Laſtly, the motive may be the mere deſire of

wealth. Avarice is for obvious reaſons cloſely connected with regularity of proceeding. A very ordinary degree of experience and obſervation will teach us, that honeſty, particularly that vulgar and moderated ſpecies of honeſty of which we are here treating, is "the beſt policy." In the majority of caſes at leaſt, a fair character ſeems eſſential to eminent ſucceſs in the world. What degree of ſcrupuloſity of conduct, and delicacy of proceeding, is required for the maintenance of a fair character, is a topic of ſeparate conſideration.

In the mean time nothing can be clearer, than that common honeſty is not prone to allow itſelf in any peculiar refinements. It acts as if it conſidered morality, rather as a neceſſity to be ſubmitted to, than as a buſineſs to be entered upon with eagerneſs and paſſion. It therefore willingly takes morality as it finds it. It readily indulges in all thoſe things which, the world has agreed, conſtitute no impeachment upon the character of an honeſt man. It carefully draws the line in this reſpect, and is little fearful of being induced to treſpaſs by the vehemence of its paſſions. What the majority of mankind has determined to be eſſential to a moral character, it ſubmits to with the moſt edifying reſignation; thoſe things, which a ſevere and inflexible examination might pronounce

pronounce to be diſhoneſt, but which the world has agreed to tolerate, it can practiſe in all inſtances without the viſitings of compunction.

But, of all the characteriſtics by which common honeſty is diſtinguiſhed, there is none more infallible than a certain mediocrity. It is impoſſible that any thing great, magnanimous and ardent, can be allied to it. Qualities of this unuſual dimenſion would diſturb its compoſure, and interfere with the even, phlegmatic, proceſſion pace by which it is diſtinguiſhed. When it is warm, it is warm by rule. Its fervour never overſteps an aſſigned limit; and it is produced in the firſt inſtance, by a deliberate judgment that fervour, under the circumſtances, will be of good effect.

If common honeſty be juſtly pourtrayed in the preceding obſervations, it is certainly to be regretted, that the applauſe of the world, and all general moral reputation, ſhould be confined to characters of this deſcription. He that would proceed by the moſt certain way to obtain an honeſt fame among mankind, muſt diſcard every thing that is moſt illuſtrious in his nature, as that which will, almoſt infallibly, ſooner or later bring his reputation into hazard. He on the contrary, that would adorn himſelf with the moſt elevated qualities of a human being, ought to come pre-

pared for the encounter of obloquy and miſrepreſentation. He ought not to expect to unite things ſo incompatible, as exalted virtue and general favour. He ſhould cultivate the ſame temper with reſpect to morality, that Horace imputes to himſelf as a poet.

Men' moveat cimex Pantilius? aut cruciet, quod
Vellicet abſentem, Demetrius? aut quod ineptus
Fannius Hermogenis lædat conviva Tigelli?
Plotius et Varius, Mæcenas, Virgiliuſque,
Valgius, et probet hæc Octavius;——
——Demetri, teque, Tigelli,
*Diſcipularum inter jubeo plorare cathedras**.

Nor did Horace perhaps expect that his verſes ſhould be praiſed by all men of talents. At

* Let Budgel charge low Grub-ſtreet on my quill,
And write whate'er he pleaſe, except my will!
Let the two Curls of town and court, abuſe
My father, mother, body, ſoul and muſe!——
But why then publiſh? Granville the polite,
And knowing Walſh, would tell me I could write;
Well-natur'd Garth inflam'd with early praiſe,
And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my lays;
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
Ev'n mitred Rocheſter would nod the head,
And St. John's ſelf (great Dryden's friends before)
With open arms receiv'd one poet more.
Happy my ſtudies, when by theſe approv'd!
Happier their author, when by theſe belov'd!

POPE.

leaſt

leaſt certain it is in life, that ſuch men frequently join the herd, are governed in their judgment of men's characters by the weakeſt prejudices, and ſenſeleſsly apply thoſe rules to others, which ſhall ſoon afterwards be employed for the condemnation of themſelves.

SECT. II.

IT may be uſeful to enumerate ſome of thoſe circumſtances, by one or other of which, men in ſome reſpects of uncommon moral endowments, are uſually found to forfeit, in the judgment of the maſs of mankind, the moſt ordinary degree of moral reputation.

Firſt, men of uncommon moral endowments, may be expected to be men of uncommon intellectual powers. But ſuch men, in ſome points at leaſt, will be apt to think for themſelves, to meditate profoundly, and, by an almoſt neceſſary conſequence, to embrace ſome opinions that are not embraced by the multitude. This is an obvious diſqualification in a candidate for common fame. No man can, it may be added, no man ought, to think quite as favourably of the man who differs from him in opinion, as of the man with whom he agrees. To ſay that the opinions which any man entertains, appear to him to be true, is an identical propoſition. Add to which, that he muſt be a weak man indeed, who does not perceive the connection between opinion

and practice, or who, while he reſpects the virtues of his friend, does not regret, as a ſerious diſadvantage, the error of his ſentiments. But this privilege, or this duty, of blaming the diſſent of our neighbours, the vulgar abuſe. Nor does it ſeldom happen, that the opinions they regard as moſt ſacred and momentous, whether in religion, in politics or morals, are the moſt ridiculouſly abſurd, or flagrantly indefenſible.

Secondly, the man, whoſe opinions are the reſult of his own reflection, will often have an individual mode of acting, as well as of thinking. The cheapeſt plan for acquiring reputation will be found to conſiſt in the conforming ourſelves to the prejudices of others. He that acts in uniſon with other men's ſentiments and expectations, will be eaſily underſtood; they will find nothing ambiguous in the interpretation of his conduct, and nothing revolting in its tenour. The maſs of mankind do not love, in the practice of human affairs at leaſt, any thing that ſurpriſes or puzzles them. They are partial to things trite and plain; and no man is in more danger of miſſing their applauſe, than the man who takes extraordinary pains to deſerve it. Upon uncommon flights of virtue they uſually put a ſiniſter interpretation. Great delicacy of

ſentiment is, in their apprehenſion, affectation and artifice. And they do not incline to yield much to thoſe comprehenſive and diſintereſted ſentiments of which they have no experience in their own boſoms.

But a miſtake, ſtill more general than thoſe yet enumerated, as well as more fatal to every impartial deciſion reſpecting men's virtue or vice, is the propenſity we have every day occaſion to obſerve among mankind, to magnify ſome quality or action that is really worthy of regret, into a vice altogether deſtructive of every pretenſion to moral excellence.

This general propenſity is, of courſe, in the higheſt degree favourable to ordinary and feeble characters, and threatens with all its hoſtility characters of energy, of grand and deciſive features.

Characters, endowed with great excellencies, will, unfortunately, frequently ſtand in need of great allowances. Men cannot perhaps be equally attentive to minutiæ and matters of lofty import. Ordinary characters are generally ſafe in this reſpect. They venture upon no untried paths. They attempt no ſublime and unuſual virtues. They have no other care incumbent upon them in this reſpect, but that of keeping

ing within a certain beaten road, never ſtraying after peculiar beauties, never compelled to have recourſe to doubtful expedients.

Want of punctuality, particularly in the mercantile concerns of life, is one of thoſe defects which, for time immemorial, have ſupplied materials for invective againſt eminent and extraordinary men.

Punctuality is no doubt a quality of high importance. That man's virtue deſerves to be regarded with ſome ſuſpicion, who can readily be induced to trifle with the time, and perhaps ſtill more with the property, of his neighbours.

But we muſt always be peculiarly expoſed to error in our judgment of the conduct of men, when we judge it indiſcriminately in the maſs, without taking into account the circumſtances that attend them.

There are no perſons ſo vehement in their condemnation of pecuniary breach of contract, as many of thoſe who, coming early into the poſſeſſion of an income fully commenſurate to their wants, never felt the preſſure of difficulties.

One of the circumſtances often omitted in the eſtimation, is the ſpirit in which perhaps the pecuniary ſupply was granted. It is often the ſpeculation of a tradeſman, who thought the concern

concern worth accepting, at the ſame time that he fully took into account the uncertainty of payment. It is often the kindneſs of a friend, who ſays to himſelf, If the debt never be diſcharged, I am content; and who afterwards perhaps leaves the claim among his heirs. Theſe circumſtances by no means cancel the pecuniary obligation; but they ought not in juſtice to be forgotten.

People in general accuſtom themſelves to forget the anguiſh of the inſolvent debtor, and the unwearied ſtruggles he has perhaps made to appear in a different character. Nothing can be more ſtrongly marked with folly and injuſtice, than the tone of voice with which we frequently hear perſons ſay, He ſhould ſatisfy the demands againſt him: Showing plainly that the feeling of their mind is, as if he had the money in his deſk, or could ſatisfy theſe demands as eaſily as lift his finger. We are never authoriſed to ſay of a poor man, He ought to pay his debts; but, He ought to exert himſelf for their liquidation.

A ſtrict and inflexible morality is no doubt worthy of commendation. But ſtrict and inflexible morality does not require, that we ſhould totally damn a man's character for a few faults, and ſtill leſs for what perhaps it was not in his power

power to do. It is not morality, but inſanity, that would teach us to ſay, Every debtor confined in the King's-Bench-Priſon, is a knave.

Laying prejudice therefore aſide, let us conſider how much of moral and eſſential defect the character of an inſolvent debtor neceſſarily implies.

He that can with an indifferent temper, conſider himſelf as preying on the labour of others ſurpriſed from them by a ſort of fraud, or as violating the fundamental principle, upon the preſervation of which the whole fabric of civil ſociety depends, muſt have a mind callous to all that is moſt important in morality. Nor will the man leſs deſerve our cenſure, who viſibly indulges in luxuries, and glaringly pampers his appetites, at the coſt, but without the conſent, of his neighbour.

In the mean time, how many ways are there, in which a man may innocently fall into the condition of an inſolvent debtor? The preſent ſtate of ſociety, by a moſt odious and accurſed contrivance, is continually ſtimulating one man to make himſelf reſponſible for the eventual vice or miſcalculation of another. One of the wretched conſequences of a ſtate of debt is, that the debtor is not permitted to make an election among his creditors; and that, at the penalty

penalty of the loſs of liberty and capacity for future exertions, he is compelled to grant to unjuſt and unmanly importunity, what he is by the ſame means compelled to deny to merit.

The poor man who is endowed with active virtue, will be, in a higher degree than his indolent neighbour, a man of experiments. He ought not to make experiments ſingularly hazardous, at another man's expence. He ought to be upon all occaſions explicit and unreſerved. But human life, in every one of its parts, is a calculation of probabilities. Any man may be deceived in his calculations. He that is determined never to expoſe himſelf to error, muſt never expoſe himſelf to action.

Let us ſuppoſe however that the debtor is clearly in the wrong; that he drank a bottle of wine, or ſolaced himſelf with a public amuſement, at a time when his pecuniary affairs were unqueſtionably worſe than nothing. Let us ſuppoſe that theſe are vices that will admit of no explanation. Yet how great and eminent virtues may exiſt in this man's boſom! He may be the moſt generous and philanthropical of mortals. He may be the greateſt benefactor the human ſpecies ever knew. Every man probably is inconſiſtent. Every man probably, be he in whatever degree virtuous, has ſome point to which unaccount-

unaccountably he has not applied thoſe principles by which he is ordinarily governed. We ought to be rigid in laying down maxims of conduct, when the degree in which thoſe maxims ſhall be realiſed depends upon their exiſtence; but, in judging the paſt conduct, particularly of others, he that is not liberal and indulgent, is not juſt.

There are other qualities of the ſame general deſcription, which are in like manner fatal, in vulgar apprehenſion, to the character in which they exiſt. Such are a neglect of the eſtabliſhed modes of religion, ſwearing, looſe converſation, gaming, exceſſive drinking and fornication.

The queſtion reſpecting theſe heads of conduct may be divided into two; firſt, what degree of diſrepute juſtly attaches itſelf to every ſingle inſtance of this kind; and ſecondly, how much ought to be imputed, in caſes where the inſtance has enlarged itſelf into a habit.

No fair and unprejudiced man will condemn a character, and leaſt of all a character in which high promiſe diſcloſes itſelf, for any ſingle inſtance of this kind.

Where the habit exiſts, there is certainly much matter for regret; with this reſerve with reſpect to the firſt head of enumeration, in the mind of every man who duly conſiders the extreme un-

certainty and innumerable errors to which we are liable, that, if religion may be true, it certainly may alſo be falſe.

Exceſſive drinking uſually leads men into debauched company and unprofitable converſation. It inevitably impairs, in a greater or leſs degree, the intellectual faculties; and probably always ſhortens the life of the perſon addicted to it, a circumſtance particularly to be regretted when that life is eminently a uſeful one.

Gaming, beſide the execrable company to which it inures a man, of perſons who can ſcarcely be ſaid to redeem their guilt in this reſpect by one virtue, accuſtoms him to the worſt habits of mind, induces him to ſeek, and to rejoice in, the misfortunes of others. In games where chance moſt preſides, it commits fortune, a thing for the right adminiſtration of which we are no doubt accountable, to the hazard of a die. Whichever party loſes a conſiderable ſum, his mind is unhinged, his reputation is tarniſhed, and his uſefulneſs ſuffers conſiderable injury. In games in which ſkill is concerned, which is more or leſs the caſe with almoſt all games, the gameſter for the moſt part propoſes to take advantage of his ſuperior knowledge and to overreach his antagoniſt.

Promiſcuous venery ſeems to argue a depraved

praved appetite. It encourages, by becoming the cuſtomer to, a trade, all of whoſe members perhaps are finally reſerved for want, diſeaſe and miſery, not to mention the low and odious depravity to which they are almoſt inevitably ſubject.

Cuſtomary ſwearing ſeems to be the mark of a paſſionate man, and certainly proves the abſence of delicacy of taſte.

Looſe converſation, in thoſe perſons with whom it becomes a habit, is ordinarily very diſguſtful. It is ſingular enough, that the ſallies of perſons who indulge themſelves in this way, are commonly more remarkable for ordure and a repulſive groſſneſs, than for voluptuouſneſs. The cenſure however againſt looſe converſation, has probably been carried too far. There ſeems to be no reaſon why knowledge ſhould not as unreſervedly be communicated on the topic here alluded to, as on any other affair of human life. With reſpect to perſons who, like Sterne, may have choſen this ſubject as the theme of a wit, pleaſant, elegant and ſportive, it is not eaſy to decide the exact degree of reprimand that is to be awarded againſt them.

Such appears to be the ſum of what is to be alleged againſt theſe habits.

Nothing can be leſs reaſonably a ſubject of contro-

controverſy than that, if the injury and unhappineſs of which a man is the author, outweigh the contrary effects, he is to be regarded as a bad member of ſociety. No ſplendour of talents, no grandeur and generoſity of ſentiment, can redeem this one plain propoſition, in any caſe where it can be fairly aſſerted. Men who have practically proved themſelves the greateſt peſts and enemies of their ſpecies, have frequently been diſtinguiſhed by eminent talents and uncommon generoſity *.

But, if this propoſition is to be rigidly applied to the condemnation of men, for whom, even while he condemns them, a well formed mind will not fail to experience ſympathy, it ought on the other hand to be as rigidly applied to the benefit of men whom the world is accuſtomed to cenſure.

Nothing can be leſs defenſible than that we ſhould overwhelm with our cenſure, men, in whom uſefulneſs will perhaps be found greatly to preponderate, and whoſe minds overflow with the moſt diſintereſted kindneſs and philanthropy:

* Political Juſtice, Book II, Chap. IV, octavo edition.

SECT.

SECT. III.

HAVING endeavoured to aſcertain the rules according to which reputation is ordinarily diſtributed, it may be a matter of juſt curioſity to enquire into the value of that, the acquiſition of which is thus capricious and uncertain.

The value of reputation is unqueſtionably great, whether we conſider it as the inſtrument of perſonal happineſs, or as an ally whoſe office it is to render efficacious our ſervices to others.

As the inſtrument of perſonal happineſs. Man in ſociety is to be regarded, in all the moſt fundamental queſtions of moral or intellectual ſcience, as an individual. There are points of view however in which he is ſcarcely an individual. The ſeats of contact and ſympathy between any one human being and his fellows are numerous. The magnetiſm of ſentiment propagates itſelf inſtantaneouſly and with great force. It is ſcarcely poſſible for a man to adhere to an opinion or a body of opinions, which all other men agree to condemn. It is ſcarcely poſſible for a man to experience complacency and ſatisfaction in a conduct, in which he is utterly unſupported by the ſuffrage of his neighbours. Every one ſeeks to gain partiſans, and upon

them he reſts as his ſecurities. Failing in this, he takes refuge in imaginary ſuffrages, drawn from the recorded paſt, from the ſuppoſition of generations yet unborn, or from the doctrines of an inviſible world. With theſe he is obliged to content himſelf; but they are uſually feeble, cold and inſufficient.

Nor is reputation more neceſſary as a ſecurity for the permanence of our own good opinion, than it is as an ally communicating efficacy to our ſervices to others. Men will not allow force to the advice, they will not liſten to the arguments, often they will even decline the practical good offices, of a perſon they diſeſteem. If I would do good to others, it is for the moſt part requiſite that they ſhould not be vehemently prejudiced againſt me. Though I ſpoke with the tongue of an angel, if they hate me, I ſhall ſcarcely convince them. To have a chance of convincing them, or in other words truly to gain from them a hearing, I muſt firſt counterbalance their prejudices. A powerful and happy mode of enunciating truth will effect this with ſome; but there are others, and it is to be feared very many, whoſe prejudices of a perſonal ſort, when once they have taken deep root, no powers of enunciation, at this time exiſting in the world, will be able to conquer. He whom

obloquy

obloquy hunts in his terreſtrial courſe, is like a man whoſe hands are tied, or whoſe mouth is gagged. He would ſerve mankind, but his exertions are nerveleſs: he would convince them, but they are deaf: he would animate them to generous action, but they are impenetrable to his exhortations.

If I am to do good to my fellow man, it is neceſſary, not only that I ſhould act, but that he ſhould co-operate with me. It is little that I can do for the man who ſits with his arms folded, and in ſupine indifference. He muſt ſympathiſe with my paſſions, melt with my regrets, and ſwell with my enthuſiaſm. To hear juſtly the ideas imparted to him, to read adequately the arguments I have digeſted and committed to writing, is an active ſervice. In proportion to the activity which this implies, it is not merely deſirable that he ſhould feel no revulſion againſt me; it is to be wiſhed that he ſhould ſet out with ſome degree of favourable opinion. Undoubtedly the validity of my poſitions ſhould be aſcertained ſolely by the ſtrength of my arguments; but he ſhould prepare himſelf with a ſentiment already conceived, that I am an advocate worth hearing. The moſt impartial inveſtigator wiſhes only to read the beſt books that have been written on each ſide of a given

queſtion, not to abuſe his time with the lucubrations of every miſerable ſcribbler. If for ſome accidental purpoſe he take up a book that he expects to be bad, but finds to be able, the firſt thing he thinks of, is to turn back again the pages he has read, and re-enter upon the peruſal with an attentive and reſpectful temper.

What ſpecies of reputation will beſt anſwer the purpoſes here deſcribed, of ſecurity to our own happineſs, and efficacy to our ſervices to others?

Undoubtedly the moſt extenſive: that which includes the favourable judgment of the vulgar, along with the ſuffrage of all the inſtructed and all the wiſe.

It has appeared however that this is for the moſt part unattainable. He that would conduct himſelf with uncommon excellence, muſt in all probability expect to loſe the kindneſs of a large portion of the vulgar, whether in an obſcure, or a more conſpicuous ſtation.

In the mean time there is a ſpecies of reputation, which, though not ſo effectual as that above mentioned, will in an important degree anſwer the purpoſes of complacency and uſefulneſs.

If we have reference only to the firſt of theſe objects, it will be ſufficiently ſecured by the approbation

probation of the acute and the excellent. So far as relates to a perſonal ſatisfaction in my opinions, I can diſpenſe with the ſuffrage of the vulgar, provided they be confirmed to me by the conſenting judgment of impartial thinkers and profound reaſoners. So far as relates to my conduct, I ſhall have great reaſon to be contented, if I find myſelf honoured by numbers of thoſe whom, upon mature inveſtigation, I perceive reaſon to honour.

With reſpect to the reputation that is connected with uſefulneſs, a diſtinction is to be made between that which is to be deſired for the man who is only to communicate his ideas to others, and the man whoſe purpoſe it is to act in their behalf.

In both caſes a more extenſive degree of reputation is neceſſary, to co-operate with my uſefulneſs, than to ſecure my contentment. The laſt of theſe purpoſes may be effected by the approbation of the diſcerning few; the former demands an approbation of a more extenſive ſort.

To give effect to exertions in ſpeaking or writing it is exceedingly to be deſired that the ſpeaker or writer ſhould be regarded, in the firſt place, as a man of ability. In the next, it is for the moſt part neceſſary that he ſhould not be ſuppoſed to ſpeak or write with any malevolent

or ſiniſter deſign; for the majority of readers tacitly exhibit in this caſe a diffidence in their own underſtandings, and prefer ſtopping their ears againſt the perſuaſions of ſuch a man, to the taſk of fairly inveſtigating the proofs he exhibits.

Theſe are the principal points. A reaſoner of acknowledged ability, and who is accounted paſſably honeſt, may gain perhaps the indulgence to be heard. Some diſcredit he muſt inevitably labour under with thoſe he would convince; for it is impoſſible for any man not to think the worſe of another for differing with him in opinion. He may be contented to be accounted wrong-headed and paradoxical. He will of courſe be regarded more or leſs as a viſionary, abſurdly deſerting the plain road of his intereſt for the ſake of gratifying his vanity. He will be conſidered as dangerous; for every ſerious thinker conceives that opinion upon any important ſubject, which for the preſent he apprehends to be falſe, to be alſo attended with pernicious conſequences.

The reputation that is neceſſary to ſecure an adequate advantage to the man who is to act in the behalf of others, is of greater extent, than is required for the man who only deſires to be heard by them. It is not enough that he ſhould be regarded

regarded as able, and free from all ſiniſter deſign. He muſt be eſteemed prudent, judicious, uniform in his activity, ſound in his calculations, and conſtant in his vigilance. He muſt be ſuppoſed to have that acuteneſs which may prevent him from being deceived by others, and that ſobriety which may defend him from being duped by himſelf. It is alſo to be deſired that he ſhould be ſuppoſed faithful to his truſt, and actuated by an earneſt deſire for the proſperity of the intereſts committed to him. Perhaps no man ought to ſeek or accept a delegation, who is unpopular with, or diſtruſted by, thoſe whom it concerns.

Such is the value of, and ſuch the benefits ariſing from, reputation. No reaſonable man will feel himſelf indifferent to the character he bears. To be in want of the ſanction derived from the good opinion of others, is an evil greatly to be deprecated.

Yet on the other hand it is an error to be acutely anxious about reputation, or, more accurately ſpeaking, to ſuffer our conduct to be influenced in eſſential particulars by a conſideration of the opinion of others.

The world is in this reſpect like certain individuals of the female ſex, whom, if a man would gain to favour his addreſſes, he muſt not ſeem too anxious to pleaſe. No ſooner do they find

him completely in their power, than they delight to treat him with harſhneſs and tyranny. The world appears to be imbued with a ſecret perſuaſion, that its opinion is too little diſcerning to be worth the courting, and that an habitual regard to this opinion is a motive that degrades the man that ſubmits to it.

An erect and dignified virtue leads us to conſider chiefly the intrinſic and direct nature of our actions, and to pay a very ſubordinate attention to the accidents that may attend upon them. An elevated temper will induce us to act from our own reflections, and not from the judgment of others. He that ſuffers himſelf to be governed by public opinion, ſubſtitutes the unſteadineſs of a weathercock, inſtead of the firmneſs of wiſdom and juſtice.

If a degree of reputation is ſometimes ſecured by this ſervility, it cannot however be a ſolid and laſting one. It may anſwer the purpoſe of him who deſires to impoſe upon others a temporary deluſion, but a man of generous ambition will ſpurn it from him with contempt. Nothing is more mortifying than that ſpecies of reputation, which the leaſt diſcernment would ſhow us was immediately to be ſucceeded by infamy or oblivion.

He that would gain in any valuable ſenſe the

the ſuffrage of the world, muſt ſhow himſelf in a certain degree ſuperior to this ſuffrage.

But, though reputation will never conſtitute, with a man of wiſdom and virtue, the firſt and leading motive of his actions, it will certainly enter into his conſideration. Virtue is a calculation of conſequences, is a means to an end, is a balance carefully adjuſted between oppoſing evils and benefits. Perhaps there is no action, in a ſtate of civiliſation and refinement, that is not influenced by innumerable motives; and there is no reaſon to believe that virtue will tend to diminiſh the ſubtlety and delicacy of intellectual ſenſation. Reputation is valuable; and whatever is of value ought to enter into our eſtimates. A juſt and reaſonable man will be anxious ſo to conduct himſelf as that he may not be miſunderſtood. He will be patient in explaining, where his motives have been miſapprehended and miſconſtrued. It is a ſpirit of falſe bravado that will not deſcend to vindicate itſelf from miſrepreſentation. It is the refuge of indolence; it is an unmanly pride that prefers a miſtaken ſuperiority to the promotion of truth and uſefulneſs. Real integrity ought not indeed to be ſore and exaſperated at every petty attack. Some things will explain themſelves; and in that caſe defence appears idle and injudicious.

A de-

A defence of this ſort is an exhibition of mental diſeaſe, not an act of virtue. But, wherever explanation will ſet right a ſingle individual, and cannot be attended with miſchief, there explanation appears to be true dignity and true wiſdom.

ESSAY

ESSAY VIII.

OF POSTHUMOUS FAME.

THE diſtribution of perſonal reputation is determined by principles in a ſtriking degree capricious and abſurd. Thoſe who undertake to be the benefactors of mankind from views of this ſort, are too often made in the cloſe of their carreer to devour all the bitterneſs of diſappointment, and are ready to exclaim, as Brutus is repreſented to have done, "Oh, virtue! I followed thee as a ſubſtantial good, but I find thee to be no more than a deluſive ſhadow!"

It is common however for perſons, overwhelmed with this ſort of diſappointment, to conſole themſelves with an appeal to poſterity, and to obſerve that future generations, when the venom of party is ſubſided, when their friendſhips and animoſities are forgotten, when miſrepreſentation ſhall no longer diſfigure their actions, will not fail to do them juſtice.

Let us enquire into the ſoundneſs of this opinion. The more we conſider it, the more perhaps

haps we ſhall find this laſt prop of what may be ſtyled, a generous vanity, yielding a very uncertain ſupport.

To poſterity we may apply what Montaigne has remarked of antiquity, "It is an object of a peculiar ſort; diſtance magniſies it." If we are to judge from experience, it does not appear that that poſterity upon which the great men of former ages reſted their hopes, have diſplayed all that virtue, that inflexible ſoundneſs of judgment, and that marvellous perſpicacity of diſcernment, which were prognoſticated of them before they came into exiſtence.

Let us take the caſe of literary reputation.

It is a well-known remark that the reputation of philoſophers, natural hiſtorians, and writers of ſcience is intrinſically and unalterably of a periſhable nature. Science is progreſſive; one man builds upon the diſcoveries of another; one writer drives another off the ſtage of literature; that which was laudable and excellent when firſt produced, as mankind advance, neceſſarily appears childiſh, inept, garrulous, and full of error and abſurdity.

Art affords a more permanent title to fame than ſcience. The poets and fine writers of antiquity ſtill appear to us excellent; while the viſions

ſions of Plato, and the arrangements of Ariſtotle, have no longer a place but in the brains of a few dreaming and obſcure pedants.

Poetry itſelf however affords but an uncertain reputation. Is Pope a poet? Is Boileau a poet? Theſe are queſtions ſtill vehemently conteſted. The French deſpiſe the tragic poetry of England, and the Engliſh repay their ſcorn with ſcorn. A few ſcholars, who are diſpoſed to reſt much of their reputation on their Greek, affirm Sophocles to be the greateſt dramatic author that ever exiſted, while the generality of readers exclaim upon him as feeble in paſſion and barren in intereſt. The unlearned are aſtoniſhed what we can find to be ſo greatly charmed with, in the imitative genius of Virgil, and the ſententious rambles of Horace. The reputation of Shakeſpear endures every day a new ordeal; while ſome find in him nothing but perfection, and others are unable to forgive the occaſional obſcurity of his ſtyle, pedantry of his language, meanneſs of his expreſſions, and diſproportion of his images. Homer has ſtood the teſt of more than two thouſand years; yet there are hundreds of no contemptible judges who regard his fame as ill-grounded and uſurping. They are mortally offended with the ridiculouſneſs of his mythology, the barbariſm of his ethics, and the incoherence

herence of an ill-conſtructed tale, told, for the moſt part, in a ſeries of tedious, proſaic verſes. From theſe inſtances it appears, that the moſt which a ſucceſsful author can pretend to, is to deliver up his works as a ſubject for eternal contention.

The aſpirant to literary fame muſt however be uncommonly fortunate, if he is permitted to look as high as this. If a man could go through the iſland of Great Britain, and diſcover the ſecrets of every heart, as the Lame Devil of Le Sage diſcovers the ſecrets of every houſe in Madrid, how much genius, what a profuſion of talent, would offer themſelves to his obſervation? In one place he would diſcover an embryo politician, in another a philoſopher, in a third a poet. There is no benefit that can be conferred upon the human race, the ſeeds and materials of which would not preſent themſelves to his view. Yet an infinite majority of theſe are deſtined to be ſwept away by the remorſeleſs hand of oblivion, and to remain to all future ages as if they had never been. They will either confer no benefit upon mankind, or none in any degree proportioned to the promiſe they exhibited. Centuries perhaps will glide away, and pine in want of thoſe benefits, which ſeemed ready to burſt from their bud and gladden the human race. Genius per-

haps is indebted for its earlieſt birth to the occurrence of favourable circumſtances. But, be this as it will, certain it is that it ſtands in need of every advantage to nurſe it to perfection, and that for this reaſon, it is almoſt conſtantly froſt-nipped, or ſtunted, or diſtorted in its proportions, and ſcarcely in any inſtance arrives at what genius is capable of being.

After all however, reputation for talents is not the ultimate object which a generous mind would deſire. I am not contented to be admired as ſomething ſtrange and out of the common road; if I deſire any thing of poſthumous honour, it is that I may be regarded with affection and eſteem by ages yet unborn. "I had rather," ſays a generous and amiable author of antiquity, "it ſhould be affirmed of me, there never was ſuch a man as Plutarch, than that Plutarch was ill-humoured, moroſe, and odious in his manners."

Moral fame is ſubject to a variety of diſadvantages, which are not incident to the fame of literature. In the latter inſtance poſterity has the whole ſubject fairly before them. We may diſpute about the merits of Homer and Shakeſpear, but they have at leaſt this benefit, that the entire evidence is in court. Whoever will, may read their works; and it needs only a firm, unbiaſſed

unbiaſſed and cultivated judgment to decide upon their excellences.

A ſtory of ſir Walter Raleigh has often been repeated; but its peculiar aptneſs to the illuſtration of the preſent ſubject, may apologiſe for its being mentioned here. When ſir Walter Raleigh wrote his Hiſtory of the World, he was a priſoner in the Tower of London. One morning he heard the noiſe of a vehement contention under his window, but he could neither ſee the combatants, nor diſtinguiſh exactly what was ſaid. One perſon after another came into his apartment, and he enquired of them the nature of the affray; but their accounts were ſo inconſiſtent, that he found himſelf wholly unable to arrive at the truth of the ſtory. Sir Walter's reflection on this was obvious, yet acute. What, ſaid he, can I not make myſelf maſter of an incident that happened an hour ago under my window, and ſhall I imagine I can truly underſtand the hiſtory of Hannibal and Cæſar?

Hiſtory is in reality a tiſſue of fables. There is no reaſon to believe that any one page in any one hiſtory extant, exhibits the unmixed truth. The ſtory is disfigured by the vanity of the actors, the intereſted miſrepreſentations of ſpectators, and the fictions, probable or improbable, with which

which every hiſtorian is inſtigated to piece out his imperfect tale. Human affairs are ſo entangled, motives are ſo ſubtle and variouſly compounded, that the truth cannot be told. What reaſonable man then can conſign his reputation to the Proteus-like uncertainty of hiſtorical record, with any ſanguineneſs of expectation?

We are perpetually told, Time will clear up the obſcurity of evidence, and poſterity judge truly of our merits and demerits. There cannot be a groſſer impoſition than this. Where is the inſtance in which a character once diſputed, has ceaſed to be diſputed? We are bid to look forward patiently to the time when party and prejudice ſhall be ſtripped of their influence. There is no ſuch time. The feuds and animoſities of party contention are eternal. The vulgar indeed ceaſe to intereſt themſelves in a queſtion, when it ceaſes to be generally diſcuſſed. But, of thoſe who curiouſly enquire into its merits, there is not one in a thouſand that eſcapes the contagion. He finds by unobſerved degrees inſinuated into him all the excluſive attachments, ſometimes all the polemical fierceneſs, that ever fell to the lot of contemporaries and actors.

A few years before the commencement of the Chriſtian æra, Cicero and Cæſar entered into a paper-war reſpecting the real worth of the cha-

racter of Cato. Is this controverſy yet decided? Do there not ſtill exiſt, on the one hand, men who look upon Cato with all the enthuſiaſtic veneration expreſſed by Cicero; and, on the other, men who, like Cæſar, treat him as a hypocritical ſnarler, and affirm that he was only indulging his pride and ill-humour, when he pretended to be indulging his love of virtue?

Perhaps there never was a man that loved fame ſo much as Cicero himſelf. When he found himſelf ill-treated by the aſperity of Cato and the impatience of Brutus, when he was aſſailed with a torrent of abuſe by the partiſans of Antony, he alſo comforted himſelf that this was a tranſitory injuſtice. While he ſtretched out his neck to the ſword of the aſſaſſin, he ſaid within himſelf, In a little time the purity of my motives will be univerſally underſtood. Ignorant, misjudging man! Do we not hear at this hour the character of this illuſtrious ornament of the human race, defamed by every upſtart ſchool-boy? When is there a day that paſſes over our heads, without a repetition of the tale of his vain-glorioufneſs, his cowardice, the imbecility of his temper, and the hollowneſs of his patriotiſm?

There is another curious controverſy ſtrikingly illuſtrative of the preſent ſubject. What ſort of men were the ancient Romans? It was

not

not to be wondered at, that, amidſt the dregs of monarchical government, great pains ſhould be taken to diſhonour them, and to bring them down to the miſerable level of the men of modern times. One would have thought that no man could have peruſed the hiſtory of Rome and the hiſtory of England, without ſeeing that in the one was preſented the ſubſtance of men, and in the other the ſhadow. I might as well have called up into the rivalſhip the hiſtories of Bildulgerid or Senegambia. But, no: the received maxim was, Men in all ages are the ſame. In France, ſince her revolution, the venerable ſhade ſeems about to be avenged of her calumniators. But there are many, even among profeſſed republicans, that join the cry, and affirm that the ſuppoſed elevation of the Roman character is merely a deluſion. This is ſo extenſively the caſe, that a man, diffident in his opinions, and ſceptical in his enquiries, dares ſcarcely pronounce how the controverſy may terminate, if indeed it ſhall have any termination.

This uncertainty it is illiberal and unjuſt to impute to the mere perverſeneſs of the human mind. It is owing, however paradoxical that may ſeem, to the want of facts. Deciſive evidence could not fail to produce a deciſive effect. We ſhould have lived firſt with the ancient Ro-

mans, and then with the men of the preſent day, to be able to inſtitute a demonſtrative compariſon between them. This want of facts is a misfortune much more general than is ordinarily imagined. A man may live for years next door to a perſon of the moſt generous and admirable temper, Mr. Fox for inſtance, and may, by the force of prejudice merely, transform him into a monſter. A given portion of familiar intercourſe would render this miſtake impoſſible. The evil however does not ſtop here. It has been found for example that two perſons of oppoſite ſexes may be lovers for half their lives, and afterwards a month of unreſtrained, domeſtic, matrimonial intercourſe ſhall bring qualities to light in each, that neither previouſly ſuſpected. No one man ever completely underſtood the character of any other man. My moſt familiar friend exaggerates perhaps ſome virtues in me; but there are others which I know I poſſeſs, to which he is totally blind. For this reaſon I ſhould lay it down as a maxim, never to take the report of a man's zealous and undoubted advocate againſt him. Let every thing be examined, as far as circumſtances will poſſibly admit, before it is aſſumed for true.

All theſe conſiderations however tend to check our ardour for fame, which is built upon ſo uncertain a tenure.

There

There is another circumſtance of conſiderable moment in this ſubject, and that is the fickleneſs of reputation and popularity. I hear one man praiſe another today; what ſecurity does that afford for his opinion a twelvemonth hence? Often the changes are ſudden and abrupt; and he has ſcarcely put a period to the exuberance of his eulogium, before he paſſes to the bitterneſs of invective. Conſiſtency is one of the virtues moſt applauded in ſociety, and as to his reputation for which every man is moſt anxious; yet no quality is more rare. Nor ought it to be frequent: there is ſcarcely any propoſition, as to which a man of an active and reflecting mind, may not recollect to have changed his ſentiments at leaſt once in his life. But, though inconſiſtency is no ſerious imputation, levity undoubtedly is. If I am right in changing my opinion, at leaſt I was wrong in the haſty manner in which I formerly adopted it. Particularly in the caſe of reputation, no man can without pain realiſe as to himſelf, the facility with which partialities are diſcarded, friendſhips diſſolved, and the man who was your warmeſt advocate, ſubſides into indifference or worſe.

Before we take our leave of this ſubject, it may be amuſing, perhaps inſtructive, to add a few

more inſtances to thoſe already cited, of the doubtfulneſs and obſcurity of hiſtorical fame.

There is ſcarcely any controverſy that has been agitated within the laſt twenty years, which has been diſtinguiſhed by more fierceneſs of aſſertion, than that reſpecting Mary Queen of Scots and the Engliſh Elizabeth. If I aſk the two firſt inquiſitive perſons I meet, what is become of this controverſy? they will each of them tell me, that the queſtion is completely decided, but one will affirm that the iſſue is in favour of Mary, and the other of Elizabeth. How ſhall I determine between their oppoſite aſſertions? A few incidental points have been cleared, but the main queſtion is where it was. Was Mary acceſſory to the murder of her huſband? After his death, is ſhe to be regarded as a chaſte and noble-minded woman in the hands of an audacious free-booter (Bothwel), or muſt ſhe be conſidered as an abandoned ſlave to the groſſeſt paſſions, and claſſed with the Meſſalinas and the Julias? Was Elizabeth incited to conſent to her death, from low motives of rivalſhip and jealouſy, or becauſe ſhe conceived the public ſafety would allow no longer delay? Was her reluctance to conſent real, or only a well concerted fiction? Was ſhe a party to the execrable

crable intrigue of which Daviſon was the tool; and were her ſubſequent indignation and grief merely a ſcene that ſhe played, to impoſe upon the underſtandings of mankind? All theſe are queſtions in a ſuit not yet determined. While ſome are influenced in their judgment by the talents of Elizabeth, by the proſperity and happineſs of her reign, and by certain inſtances of the moderation and rectitude of her domeſtic counſels, others find themſelves unable to deviſe terms of abhorrence and infamy, to expreſs their averſion againſt her. Such a thing is fame! There are even ſome, ridiculous as it may appear, that are bribed by perſonal charms which more than two centuries ago were conſigned to putrefaction and duſt, and would feel it as an imputation on their gallantry, if they could ſide with a woman ſo little attractive as Elizabeth, againſt the moſt accompliſhed beauty of her age.

The character of Charles the firſt is in like manner a ſubject of eternal contention, and he is treated as a model of intellectual grace and integrity, or as frigid, auſtere and perfidious, according as his judges ſhall happen to be tories or whigs, monarchical or republican.

Henry lord Bolingbroke was one of the great ornaments of the beginning of the preſent cen-

tury. He has been admired as a ſtateſman, an orator, a man of letters and a philoſopher. Pope, in the eagerneſs of his reverence and devotion, foreſaw the time when his merits would be univerſally acknowledged, and aſſured the world that the "ſons" of his perſonal adverſaries, would "bluſh" for the malignity and injuſtice of "their fathers *." But Pope, though a poet, was no prophet. We every day hear Bolingbroke ſpoken of by one man or another, with as much contempt as could have been expreſſed by the moſt rancorous of his political rivals.

The late doctor Johnſon is a memorable inſtance in ſupport of our poſition. Never have ſo many volumes been filled with the anecdotes of any private individual. If the character of any man can be decided by a record of facts, certainly his ought to be decided. But the caſe is otherwiſe. Each man has an opinion of his own reſpecting it; but, if the ſubject be ſtarted in converſation, it would be totally impoſſible to predict whether the favourers or the enemies would prove the greater number; were it not that the maſs of mankind are generally ready to combine againſt excellence, becauſe we can never adequately underſtand that, of which we have no experience in ourſelves. Nor will it be any

* Eſſay on Man.

preſumption to foretel, that, unleſs the improvement of the human ſpecies ſhall prove rapid beyond all former example, the ſame diſpute about the character of Johnſon will remain a century hence, and the poſterity will be ſtill unborn that are to paſs an unanimous verdict upon his merits.

ESSAY IX.

OF DIFFERENCE IN OPINION.

SECT. I.

ONE of the beſt practical rules of morality that ever was delivered, is that of putting ourſelves in the place of another, before we act or decide any thing reſpecting him.

It is by this means only that we can form an adequate idea of his pleaſures and pains. The nature of a being, the firſt principle of whoſe exiſtence is ſenſation, neceſſarily obliges us to refer every thing to ourſelves; and, but for the practice here recommended, we ſhould be in danger of looking upon the concerns of others with inadvertence, conſequently with indifference.

Nor is this voluntary tranſmigration leſs neceſſary, to enable us to do juſtice to other men's motives and opinions, than to their feelings.

We obſerve one mode of conduct to be that which, under certain given circumſtances, as

mere ſpectators, we ſhould determine to be moſt conſiſtent with our notions of propriety. The firſt impulſe of every human being, is, to regard a different conduct with impatience and reſentment, and to aſcribe it, when purſued by our neighbour, to a wilful perverſeneſs, chooſing, with open eyes and an enlightened judgment, the proceeding leaſt compatible with reaſon.

The moſt effectual method for avoiding this miſinterpretation of our neighbour's conduct, is to put ourſelves in his place, to recollect his former habits and prejudices, and to conjure up in our minds the allurements, the impulſes and the difficulties to which he was ſubject.

Perhaps it is more eaſy for us to make due allowances for, or, more accurately ſpeaking, to form a juſt notion of, our neighbour's motives and actions, than of his opinions.

In actions it is not difficult to underſtand, that a man may be hurried away by the preſſure of circumſtances. The paſſion may be ſtrong; the temptation may be great; there may be no time for deliberation.

Theſe conſiderations do not apply, or apply with a greatly diminiſhed force, to the caſe of a man's forming his judgment upon a ſpeculative queſtion. Time for deliberation may, ſooner or later, always be obtained. Paſſion indeed may incline

incline him to one ſide rather than the other; but not with the impetuoſity, with which from time to time it incites us to action. Temptation there may be; but of ſo ſober and methodical a ſort, that we do not eaſily believe, that its march can go undetected, or that the mind of the man who does not ſurmount it, can poſſeſs any conſiderable ſhare of integrity or good faith.

No ſentiment therefore is more prevalent, than that which leads men to aſcribe the variations of opinion which ſubſiſt in the world, to diſhoneſty and perverſeneſs. It is thus that a Papiſt judges of a Proteſtant, and a Proteſtant of a Papiſt; ſuch is the deciſion of the Hanoverian upon the Jacobite, and the Jacobite upon the Hanoverian; ſuch the notion formed by the friend of eſtabliſhments concerning the republican, and by the republican concerning the friend of eſtabliſhments. The chain of evidence by which every one of theſe parties is determined, appears, to the adherent of that party, ſo clear and ſatisfactory, that he heſitates not to pronounce, that perverſeneſs of will only could reſiſt it.

This ſort of uncharitableneſs was to be expected under the preſent condition of human intellect. No character is more rare than that of a man who can do juſtice to his antagoniſt's argument;

argument; and, till this is done, it muſt be equally difficult to do juſtice to an antagoniſt's integrity. Aſk a man, who has been the auditor of an argument, or who has recently read a book, adverſe to his own habits of thinking, to reſtate the reaſonings of the adverſary. You will find him betraying the cauſe he undertakes to explain, in every point. He exhibits nothing but a miſerable deformity, in which the moſt vigilant adverſary could ſcarcely recogniſe his image. Nor is there any diſhoneſty in this. He tells you as much as he underſtood. Since therefore he underſtands nothing of the adverſary but his oppoſition, it is no wonder that he is virulent in his invective againſt him.

The ordinary ſtrain of partiſans, are like the two knights, of whom we are told that, in coming in oppoſite directions to a head fixed on a pole in a croſs-way, of which one ſide was gold, and the other ſilver, they immediately fell to tilting; the right-hand champion ſtoutly maintaining that the head was gold, and the other as indignantly rejoining that it was ſilver. Not one diſputant in ten ever gives himſelf the trouble to paſs over to his adverſary's poſition; and, of thoſe that do, many take ſo ſhort and timid a glance, and with an organ ſo clouded with prejudice, that, for any benefit they receive, they

they might as well have remained eternally upon the ſame ſpot.

There is ſcarcely a queſtion in the world, that does not admit of two plauſible ſtatements. There is ſcarcely a ſtory that can be told, of which one ſide is not good, till the other is related. When both ſides have been heard, the ordinary reſult to a careful and ſtrict obſerver, is, much contention of evidence, much obſcurity, and much ſcepticiſm. He that is ſmitten with ſo ardent a love of truth, as continually to fear leſt error ſhould paſs upon him under ſome ſpecious diſguiſe, will find himſelf ultimately reduced to a nice weighing of evidence, and a ſubtle obſervation as to which ſcale preponderates upon almoſt every important queſtion. Such a man will expreſs neither aſtoniſhment nor unbelief, when he is told that another perſon, of uncommon purity of motives, has been led to draw a different concluſion.

It would be difficult to confer a greater benefit upon mankind, than would be conferred by him, who ſhould perſuade them to a diſcarding of mutual bigotry, and induce them to give credit to each other for their common differences of opinion. Such a perſuaſion would effect an almoſt univerſal rout of the angry paſſions. Perſecution and proſecution for opinion would rarely

rarely venture abroad in the world. Much of family diſſenſion, much of that which generates alienation in the kindeſt boſoms, much even of the wars which have hitherto deſolated mankind, would be ſwept away for ever from the face of the earth. There is nothing about which men quarrel more obſtinately and irreconcilably, than difference of opinion. There is nothing that engenders a profounder and more inveterate hate.

If this ſubject were once underſtood, we ſhould then look only to the conſequences of opinions. We ſhould no more think of hating a man for being an atheiſt or a republican, though theſe opinions were exactly oppoſite to our own, than for having the plague. We ſhould pity him; and regret the neceſſity, if neceſſity there were, for taking precautions againſt him. In the mean time there is this difference between a man holding erroneous opinions, and a man infected with contagious diſtemper. Miſtaken opinions are perhaps never a ſource of tumult and diſorder, unleſs the perſons who hold them are perſecuted*, or placed under circumſtances of iniquitous oppreſſion †. The remedy therefore in this caſe, is

* As at the period of the Reformation.

† As in the period preceding the French Revolution, where the

is to remove unjuſtifiable reſtraints; and then leave the queſtion to be fairly decided in the liſts of argument and reaſon.

The opinions men eſpouſe are of two ſorts; thoſe of which they cannot recollect the commencement, but that have been entertained by them ever ſince they had an idea of the ſubjects to which they relate; and thoſe that belong to ſubjects, reſpecting which they have by ſome means been induced to reverſe their firſt judgments, and embrace tenets different from thoſe to which they formerly profeſſed an adherence.

In the beginning of the preſent Eſſay, we had occaſion to recommend the rule of morality, which directs us, to put ourſelves in the place of another, before we act or decide any thing reſpecting him.

There is another rule, the obſervation of which would be ſcarcely leſs ſalutary in the ſubject of which we are treating: the rule which enjoins us, to retire into ourſelves, and examine the motives of our own characters and proceeding, before we hold ourſelves competent to decide upon thoſe of others.

Self-examination is well calculated to teach us indulgence towards thoſe opinions of others, of

the general oppreſſion of all orders of men, gave a tumultuous activity to the principle of innovation.

which

which the holder is unable to recollect the commencement. Where is the man preſumptuous enough to affirm that, in all his opinions, religious, moral and political, in ſcience and art, of decorum, of pleaſure and prudence, he is wholly uninfluenced by education and early habits, and holds his ſentiments from deduction alone, entirely independent of his parents, his companions, his age and his country? Beyond doubt, there is no man thus independent. One man has done a little more, and another a little leſs. But in the wiſeſt of us, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, the mother ſtill lurks about the heart*. Arrogant aſſertions of independence indeed are frequent enough; but they only prove the folly and ſupineneſs of the man that makes them. It will preſently appear from the very nature of the human mind, that nothing is more eaſy than a deception of this ſort.

In thoſe errors which a man derives from his education, it is obvious to remark, that at leaſt there was nothing deſigning or diſhoneſt on his part in the firſt receiving them. The only blame that can be imputed to him, is, that he has not yielded an impartial attention to the evidence by which they are refuted. Alas! impartiality is

* Perſius, Sat. V. ver. 92.

a virtue hung too high, to be almoſt ever within the reach of man!

How many men are there, that have had this evidence exhibited to them, or poſſeſſed an opportunity of examining it? Thouſands of Papiſts, Jacobites, and republicans, as well as of perſons holding an oppoſite ſentiment, have gone out of the world, without ever attaining a fair and adequate occaſion of bringing their tenets to the teſt.

But what is perhaps chiefly worthy of obſervation under this head, is, the feeble and inſufficient manner in which almoſt every tenet, however unqueſtionably true, is uſually maintained. The rigid logician or philoſopher, if he admit the principle intended to be ſupported, is frequently obliged to throw away and diſcard the whole edifice upon which it reſted. To the majority of the world, this circumſtance is unknown.

Every argument is liable to be expoſed to the inſpection of two ſets of hearers or readers; the firſt friendly, the ſecond hoſtile, to the doctrine intended to be ſupported. To the former of theſe, in general at leaſt, every argument is ſatisfactory, every evidence concluſive. No man can have been much converſant in matters of debate, without having had occaſion to hear,

from

from men otherwiſe of great ſagacity and talent, the moſt extravagant encomiums of the vileſt compoſitions, without any other aſſignable cauſe, than that they were written on their own ſide of the queſtion. This ſingle circumſtance blinded them to every defect.

On the other hand, thoſe hearers or readers, who are hoſtile to the doctrine intended to be ſupported, can diſcover nothing but defects. Every argument, however ſkilfully treated, has perhaps its weak and vulnerable part. Upon this part they obſtinately fix. They never recur to the equitable rule, of ſeparating a doctrine from its champion, and remembering that the firſt may be ſound, while the laſt may be feeble; but abſurdly conſtrue every miſtake of the champion, into a defect in the cauſe. He that would ſeek truth with inflexible zeal, muſt himſelf become counſel for the adverſary, muſt reconſtruct his arguments, remove the droſs, ſupply the omiſſions, and give conſiſtency and combination to the whole. He muſt not confound the queſtion, which is a portion ſtruck off from the maſs of eternal ſcience, with the character of him that agitates it, the creature of a day. But where is the man who will undertake this perſevering and laborious taſk?

Both the ſets of hearers or readers here de-

ſcribed, are honeſt after their different modes. But it is the furtheſt in the world from being wonderful, that men, who read in ſo different a ſpirit, ſhould riſe from the peruſal with oppoſite impreſſions.

Reaſons like theſe ſufficiently ſhow how eaſy it is to account for the obſtinacy with which men adhere to firſt impreſſions, and how little ground there is for imputing it to them as an enormous offence. The cauſes of this pertinacity are cloſely interwoven with the nature of man; and, inſtead of conceiving, as we are apt to do, that the perſons in whom it betrays itſelf fall below the ſtandard of humanity, we ought, on the contrary, to regard thoſe who conquer it as having liſted themſelves above the level of almoſt the whole maſs of their ſpecies.

But the world, even when it is prevailed on to forgive an adherence to the impreſſions of education, does not fail to regard with particular ſeverity thoſe changes of ſentiment in which a man embraces any new error, or any tenet which his cenſors regard as an error. Their invective acquires double bitterneſs, when the change of opinion appears to coincide in time with certain circumſtances of intereſt rendering the new opinion particularly convenient to the convert.

It would conſtitute perhaps the moſt curious

chapter in the hiſtory of the human mind, if any perſon ſufficiently competent to the taſk, were to undertake to detect the various cauſes which generate change of opinion among men. It happens in moſt caſes that the perſon who undergoes this change, is himſelf unable to aſſign the period at which it took place. He only knows that he was of one opinion in January, and holds another in June. This circumſtance alone is ſufficiently ſuſpicious.

It will probably be found that every man who undergoes a change of opinion, imagines he has obtained a new acceſſion of evidence. But was this the only cauſe of the change?

Undoubtedly argument is in its own nature capable of effecting a change of opinion. But there are other cauſes which have a ſimilar influence, and that unconſciouſly to the perſon in whom they operate.

Man has not only an underſtanding to reaſon, but a heart to feel. Intereſt, as has been already remarked, can do much; and there are many kinds of intereſt, beſide that which is expreſsly pecuniary.

I was of one opinion in January, and am of another in June. If I gain a penſion, or a rich church-living by the change, this circumſtance may well be ſuppoſed to have ſome weight with

me. If it recommend me to a wealthy relative or patron, this is not indifferent. It perhaps only tends to introduce me into good company. Perhaps I am influenced by an apprehenſion of ſomething beautiful, generous and becoming in the ſentiment to be embraced, inſtead of being under the mere influence of argument. Men are rarely inclined to ſtop ſhort in a buſineſs of this ſort; and, having detected one error in the party to which they formerly adhered, they are gradually propelled to go over completely to the oppoſite party. A candid mind will frequently feel itſelf impreſſed with the difficulties which bear upon its ſentiments, eſpecially if they are forcibly brought forward in argument; and will haſtily diſcard its own ſyſtem for another, when that other, if fairly conſidered, was liable to objections not leſs cogent than the former.

But, what is moſt material to the ſubject of which we are treating, all theſe influences are liable, in a greater or leſs degree, to eſcape the man who is moſt rigid in ſcrutiniſing the motives by which he is influenced. Indeed we have ſpoken of them as changes of opinion; which implies a certain degree of ſincerity. The vulgar indeed, where they ſuſpect any ſiniſter motive, regard the man as holding the ſame opinion ſtill, and only pretending to have undergone a change.

But

But this is a phenomenon much more rare than is commonly imagined. The human mind is exceedingly pliable in this reſpect; and he that earneſtly wiſhes to entertain an opinion, will uſually in no long time become its ſerious adherent. We even frequently are in this reſpect the dupes of our own devices. A man who habitually defends a ſentiment, commonly ends with becoming a convert. Pride and ſhame fix him in his new faith. It is a circumſtance by no means without a precedent, for a man to become the enthuſiaſtic advocate of a paradox, which he at firſt defended by way of bravado, or as an affair of amuſement.

Undoubtedly the man who embraces a tenet from avarice, ambition, or the love of pleaſure, even though he ſhould not be aware of the influence exerted by theſe motives, is ſo far an imbecil character. The cenſure to which he is expoſed, would however be in ſome degree mitigated, if we recollected that he fell into this weakneſs in common with every individual of his ſpecies, and that there is not a man that lives, of whom it can be affirmed that any one of his opinions was formed with impartiality.

There is nothing more memorable in the analyſis of intellectual operations, than the ſubtlety

of motives*. Every thing in the phenomena of the human mind, is connected together. At firſt ſight one would ſuppoſe nothing was eaſier, than for the man himſelf to aſſign the motive of any one of his actions. Strictly ſpeaking this is abſolutely impoſſible. He can never do it accurately; and we often find him committing the abſurdeſt and moſt glaring miſtakes. Every incident of our lives contributes to form our temper, our character and our underſtanding; and the maſs thus formed modifies every one of our actions. All in man is aſſociation and habit.

It may be objected indeed that our voluntary actions are thus influenced, but not our judgments, which are purely an affair of the underſtanding. But this is a groundleſs diſtinction. Volition and underſtanding, in the ſtructure of the human mind, do not poſſeſs provinces thus ſeparate and independent. Every volition is accompanied by a judgment; and we cannot perform one voluntary action, till we have firſt enlightened, or impoſed upon, as the caſe may require, the reaſoning faculty. It is true to a proverb, that what a man wiſhes to believe, he is in the moſt direct road to regard as a branch of his creed.

* Political Juſtice, Vol. I, Chap. V, §. 2, octavo edition.

How

How ridiculous then and dull of apprehenſion is the man, who affirms of himſelf, in any imaginable inſtance, that he is under no ſiniſter influence, and loudly aſſerts his own impartiality? Yet no ſpectacle more frequent than this. Let us take the firſt example that offers.

A letter of reſignation is juſt publiſhed, addreſſed by general Waſhington to the people of the United States of America, and dated 17 September 1796. In that letter is contained the following ſentence. The ſentiments I am about to deliver, "will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only ſee in them the diſintereſted warnings of a parting friend, who can poſſibly have no perſonal motive to bias his counſel."

To expoſe the abſurdity of this paſſage, it is not neceſſary to refine upon the term "perſonal motive," and to obſerve that every action of general Waſhington's life, every peculiarity of his education, every ſcene in which he was engaged, every ſenſation he ever experienced, was calculated to produce ſomething more than the poſſibility of perſonal motive; ſince all that, which is peculiar to one man, in contradiſtinction to his fellow men, is ſuſceptible of being made perſonal motive.

But, to take the term in its vulgar acceptation,

ation, there were certainly very few men in America more liable to perſonal motive, than general Waſhington. He had filled, with very little interruption, the firſt ſituations in his country for more than twenty years. He takes it for granted indeed that he is exempted from perſonal motive, becauſe he conceives that his wiſh to withdraw himſelf is ſincere. But, in the whole period of his public adminiſtration, did he adopt no particular plan of politics; and is he abſolutely ſure that he ſhall have no perſonal gratification in ſeeing his plans perpetuated? Is he abſolutely ſure that he looks back with no complacence to the period of his public life; and that he is entirely free from the wiſh, that ſuch principles may be purſued in future, as ſhall be beſt calculated to reflect luſtre upon his meaſures? No diſcerning man can read this letter of reſignation, without being ſtruck with the extreme difference between general Waſhington and a man who ſhould have come to the conſideration of the ſubject *de novo*, or without perceiving how much the writer is fettered in an hundred reſpects, by the force of inveterate habits.——To return from this example to the ſubject of the Eſſay,

Let us for a moment put out of the queſtion the conſideration of pleaſure and pain, hope and

and fear, as they are continually operating upon us in the formation of our opinions. Separately from theſe, there are numerous circumſtances, calculated to miſlead the moſt ingenuous mind in its ſearch after truth, and to account for our embracing the ſhadow of reaſon, when we imagined ourſelves poſſeſſed of the ſubſtance. One man, according to the habits of his mind, ſhall regard with ſatisfaction the ſlighteſt and moſt flimſy arguments, and beſtow upon them the name of demonſtration. Another man, a mathematician for inſtance, ſhall be inſenſible to the force of thoſe accumulated preſumptions, which are all that moral and practical ſubjects will ever admit. A misfortune, more pitiable than either of theſe, is when a ſtrict and profound reaſoner falls into ſome unperceived miſtake at the commencement, in conſequence of which, the further he proceeds in his enquiry, and the more cloſely he follows his train of deductions, he plunges only the more deeply in error.

SECT.

SECT. II.

THE maxims, which the preceding reaſonings are calculated to eſtabliſh, are, that we ſhall rarely be in the right in allowing ourſelves to ſuſpect the ſincerity of others in the cauſe to which they profeſs adherence; that nothing can be more various than the habits of different minds, or more diverſified than their modes of contemplating the ſame ſubject; that nothing can be more deceitful than the notion, ſo general among ſuperficial thinkers, that every cauſe but their own is deſtitute of any plauſibility of appearance; and that we can never have a juſt view of the ſincerity of men in opinions we deem to be abſurd, till we have learned to put ourſelves in their place, and to become the temporary advocates of the ſentiment we reject.

It may be uſeful to illuſtrate theſe propoſitions by a ſpecific inſtance.

The controverſy at preſent moſt vehemently agitated, is that between new and old ſyſtems of political government. The advocates of both parties for the moſt part ſee nothing, on the ſide adverſe

adverſe to their own, but wilful perverſeneſs. They cannot believe that their opponents are ſincere and ardent well-wiſhers to the happineſs of mankind. All they diſcern in one caſe, is a ſpirit of monopoly and oppreſſion; and in the other, is a diſcontented heart, anxious to gratify its cravings by the moſt rapacious and diſhoneſt means. If each party could be perſuaded to ſee the principle of controverſy in the other in a favourable light, and to regard itſelf and its opponent as contending by different modes for the ſame object, the common welfare, it would be attended, in this great criſis of the moral world, with the happieſt effects.

We will take it for granted for the preſent that the innovators have the right ſide of the argument, and will exhibit certain conſiderations calculated to evince the ſincerity and good intention of their adverſaries. The inſtance adduced therefore will be ſomewhat better adapted for the conviction of the former than the latter.

It may be laid down as an axiom that the enlightened advocate of new ſyſtems of government, proceeds upon the eſtabliſhment or aſſumption of the progreſſive nature of man, whether as an individual, or as the member of a ſociety. Let us ſee how far the principal champions

pions of both hypotheſes, are agreed in this doctrine.

The ſupporters of the ſyſtems of government at preſent in exiſtence, build upon it to a certain extent, as the main pillar of their edifice. They look through the hiſtory of man. They view him at firſt a miſerable ſavage, deſtitute of all the advantages and refinements of a civiliſed ſtate, and ſcarcely in any reſpect elevated above the brutes. They view him in the progreſſive ſtages of intellectual improvement, and dwell with extacy upon the poliſhed manners, the generous ſentiments, the ſcientific comprehenſiveneſs, the lofty flights and divine elevation, which conſtitute what may at preſent be denominated the laſt ſtage of that progreſs. They call to mind with horror the fierce and unrelenting paſſions of ſavages and barbarians. They ſee that it has been only by graduated ſteps that theſe paſſions have been controled, in the degree in which they are now controled; and they juſtly regard perſonal ſecurity as the grand nouriſher of leiſure, diſintereſtedneſs, ſcience and wiſdom.

Thus far both parties ought to be conſidered as perfectly agreed. The facts, thus aſſerted by the champion of eſtabliſhments, are too obvious to be diſputed by his opponent; and the pro-

greſs,

greſs, which mankind has already made, is one of the moſt impreſſive arguments in proof of the progreſs he ſeems yet deſtined to make. It is to be regarded merely as the momentary extravagance of the ariſtocrat, when he laments the extinction of the age of chivalry; nor is the ſally of the democrat entitled to a better name, who, in contemplation of the conceivable improvements of ſociety, paſſes a general condemnation upon all that it has hitherto effected.

The two parties being thus far agreed, it is at leaſt as much paſſion and temperature, as ſober reaſon, that leads them wide of each other in what is to follow. The innovator, ſtruck with theoretical beauties which, he truſts, ſhall hereafter be realiſed, looks with an eye of elevated indifference and ſcrutiniſing ſeverity, upon what mankind have hitherto effected. His opponent, ſetting out from the ſame point, the love of intellect and improvement, is impreſſed with ſo ardent an admiration of what has been already attained, that no conſideration can prevail upon him to commit it to the ſlighteſt hazard.

He ſurely however involves himſelf in a glaring inconſiſtency. If all men had been of his temper, the advancement, which he is now contented implicitly to admire, would never have been made. If we praiſe our anceſtors, we ſhould

imitate

imitate them. Not imitate them by ſervilely treading in their ſteps, but by imbibing their ſpirit. Thoſe of our anceſtors who are moſt highly applauded, were judicious and ſucceſsful innovators. They realiſed for mankind what had not previouſly been attained.

The rational and ſober innovator ought to admit, that innovation is a meaſure attended with peculiar peril, that it ſhould be entered upon with caution, and introduced in portions, ſmall and detached. This is the point, in which the wiſeſt of both parties might learn to agree.

The alarm of the oppoſite party is by no means unfounded in truth. All men love independence. This is a laudable paſſion. All men love power. This is a more queſtionable propenſity. From theſe paſſions taken together, united with the actual imperfections of the human mind, ariſes the neceſſity of political reſtraint. The precautions that are neceſſary for the preſervation of property, co-operating with the low propenſities of ſelfiſhneſs and ignorance, produce a great inequality of poſſeſſions; and this inequality is inevitably the ſource of much heart-burning and animoſity.

The evils here alluded to, might perhaps, all of them, have been prevented, if men had been willing to form themſelves into ſmall communities,

nities, inſtead of coaleſcing into great nations *. But if they had always been contented with this, would the arts and improvements of mankind, which eaſily go on when once originated, have ever been called into exiſtence? There are many things, not abſolutely good, which have been good temporarily and under given circumſtances. Perhaps luxury, that luxury which is incompatible with a pure and elevated morality, is an inſtance of this †.

But, granting for a moment that the coalition of mankind into great nations ought never to have taken place, this does not alter the queſtion before us. This coalition actually exiſts. It conſtitutes a ſtate exceedingly artificial. It is at war with the ſtrongeſt propenſities of individual man. It therefore requires great caution and extreme vigilance to maintain it. There is probably however not a political theoriſt in exiſtence, who would ſay, that it ought to be totally and immediately deſtroyed. There is not a ſober man in the world, with nerves ſtrong enough calmly to face the tremendous iſſue.

The advocate of eſtabliſhments ſays, We have already gained much; the ſpectacle of human

* Political Juſtice, Book V, Chap. XXII, octavo edition.

† Political Juſtice, Book VIII, Chap. VII, octavo edition.

ſociety exhibits much that is admirable; I cannot conſent that all this ſhould be put to hazard for the ſake of an untried experiment: Let us be aware of our true intereſt; let us be contented with the things that we have. Surely this man may be eminently both honeſt and philanthropical.

The rational advocate of new ſyſtems of government, would touch actual inſtitutions with a careful hand. He would deſire further changes and freſh improvements; but he would conſider the taſk of innovation as an arduous buſineſs, nor is there any thing that would excite more the apprehenſiveneſs of his mind, than a precipitate and headlong ſpirit.

There is nothing perhaps that has contributed more to the introduction and perpetuating of bigotry in the world, than the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion. It cauſed the ſpirit of intolerance to ſtrike a deep root; and it has entailed that ſpirit upon many who have ſhaken off the directer influence of its tenets. It is the characteriſtic of this religion, to lay the utmoſt ſtreſs upon faith. Its central doctrine is contained in this ſhort maxim, He that believeth, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not, ſhall be damned *. What it is, the belief of which is

* Mark, Chap. XVI, ver. 16.

ſaving,

ſaving, the records of our religion have left open to controverſy; but the fundamental nature of faith, is one of its moſt unqueſtionable leſſons. Faith is not only neceſſary to preſerve us from the pains of hell; it is alſo requiſite as a qualification for temporal bleſſings. When any one applied to Jeſus to be cured of any diſeaſe, he was firſt of all queſtioned reſpecting the implicitneſs of his faith; and, in Galilee, and other places, Chriſt wrought not many miracles, becauſe of their unbelief*. Never were curſes poured out in a more copious ſtream, or with a more ardent and unſparing zeal, than by the meek and holy Jeſus upon thoſe who oppoſed his pretenſions †. The ſhort and comprehenſive deſcription beſtowed upon the refractory to the end of time appears to be this, They have loved darkneſs, rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil ‡.

There is a vulgar error cloſely connected with the ſubject of this eſſay, which, on account of its extenſive influence, deſerves to be noticed;

* Matthew, Chap. VIII, ver. 13; Chap. IX, ver. 28, 29; Chap. XIII, ver. 58: Mark, Chap. V, ver. 36; Chap. IX, ver. 23; Chap. XI, ver. 23, 24: John, Chap. XI, ver. 40; Chap. XX, ver. 29.

† Take as an example, Matthew, Chap. XXIII, ver. 33.

‡ John, Chap. III, ver. 19.

I mean, the demerit of inconſiſtency. It is wonderful how great a ſpace this topic occupies in the debates of the Engliſh parliament. The greateſt luminary of the preſent houſe of commons, Mr. Fox, will ſometimes occupy one half of a ſpeech upon the moſt intereſting queſtion, with a defence of his own conſiſtency.

It is ſcarcely neceſſary to remark, that an argument upon an intereſting queſtion, is always much degraded, when it is ſuffered to involve with it a perſonal diſcuſſion.

Of perſonal diſcuſſions, that of conſiſtency is one of the moſt frivolous.

Inconſiſtency is as unfortunate a teſt of a man's inſincerity, as can be imagined.

If by inconſiſtency we underſtand ſome contradiction between one branch of a man's creed and another, this is undoubtedly a defect. It proves that he is imperfect, not that he is diſhoneſt.

But, if by inconſiſtency we underſtand, that he does not believe now what he once believed, that his character is changed, and his conduct regulated by different principles, this is ſcarcely any argument of preſent defect. Yet this is the ſort of inconſiſtency, the charge of which is moſt frequently and vehemently repelled.

It is obvious that the man, who, in adjuſting

accounts with his own mind, is influenced as to the opinions he ſhall now receive, by the conſideration of what it was that he formerly believed, is ſo far a vitiated character. He ought to be ready to receive the truth, however unlike it may be to his former habits of thinking.

But we are entitled to go further than this, and to affirm that inconſiſtency, in the ſenſe laſt explained, is glorious, inſtead of being ſhameful. Who is it that is likely, through Shakeſpear's ſeven ages of man, to think always alike? The ſlave of prejudice, or the ſlave of idleneſs. The active and independent mind, the genuine lover of and enquirer after truth, will inevitably paſs through certain revolutions of opinion.

It may be alleged in behalf of thoſe who are eager in the vindication of the unalterableneſs of their opinions and principles, that great ſtreſs is laid upon this point by the vulgar.

But then, on the other hand, it is to be remarked that, when great and illuſtrious characters lend their aid to the prejudices of the vulgar, they add much to the vigour of prejudice, and are ſo far the enemies, not the friends, of the improvement and happineſs of mankind.

ESSAY X.

OF POLITENESS.

SECT. I.

IT has been no unfrequent profeſſion among men of a bold temper, and who are ſmitten with a love for the ſublimer virtues, that they are enemies to politeneſs.

One of the greateſt misfortunes incident to morality, as well as to a majority of ſciences, flows from the ambiguity of words.

By politeneſs many perſons underſtand artificial manners, the very purpoſe of which is to ſtand between the feelings of the heart and the external behaviour. The word immediately conjures up to their mind a corrupt and vicious mode of ſociety, and they conceive it to mean a ſet of rules, founded in no juſt reaſon, and oſtentatiouſly practiſed by thoſe who are familiar with them, for no purpoſe more expreſsly, than to confound and keep at a diſtance thoſe who, by the accident of their birth or fortune, are ignorant of them.

In

In this ſenſe no doubt politeneſs is worthy of our deciſive diſapprobation, and in this ſenſe it is to be regretted that there is vaſtly too much politeneſs in the world.

Urbanity is a term that has met with a better fortune among our contemporaries, than politeneſs. Yet, if we have recourſe to their etymology, politeneſs is certainly not leſs appropriate and laudable. As it deſcends to us from the Greek, its nature is preciſely coincident; as it comes to us through the medium of the Latin word, which ſignifies to poliſh, to make ſmooth, agreeable to the eye, and pleaſant to the touch, it is ſufficiently adapted to that circumſtance in morals which may admit of a ſubſtantial vindication.

Morality, or the exerciſe of beneficence, conſiſts of two principal parts, which may be denominated the greater morality, and the leſs. Thoſe actions of a man's life, adapted to purpoſes of beneficence, which are fraught with energy, and cannot be practiſed but in an exalted temper of mind, belong to the greater morality; ſuch as ſaving a fellow being from death, raiſing him from deep diſtreſs, conferring on him a memorable advantage, or exerting one's ſelf for the ervice of multitudes. There are other actions, in which a man may conſult the tranſitory feel-

ings of his neighbours, and to which we can ſeldom be prompted by a lofty ſpirit of ambition; actions which the heart can record, but which the tongue is rarely competent to relate. Theſe belong to the leſſer morality.

It ſhould ſeem as if our temper and the permanent character of our minds, ſhould be derived from the greater morality; but that the ordinary and eſtabliſhed carreer of our conduct, ſhould have reference to the leſs.

No doubt a man of eminent endowments and fortunate ſituation may do more good by the practice of the greater morality, than he can do miſchief by the neglect of the leſs. But, even in him, the leſſer moralities, as they are practiſed or neglected, will produce important effects. The neglect of them, however illuſtrious may be the tenour of his life, and however eminent his public ſervices, will reflect a ſhade of ambiguity upon his character. Thus authors, whoſe writings have been fraught with the ſeeds of general happineſs, but whoſe conduct towards their relatives or acquaintance has been attended with any glaring defect, have ſeldom obtained much credit for purity of principle. With the ordinary rate of mankind it is worſe: when they have parted with the leſſer moralities, they have nearly parted with every thing.

The

The great line of diſtinction between theſe two branches of morality, is that the leſs is of incomparably more frequent demand. We may riſe up and lie down for weeks and months together, without being once called upon for the practice of any grand and emphatical duty. But it will be ſtrange if a day paſs over our heads, without affording ſcope for the leſſer moralities. They furniſh therefore the moſt obvious teſt as to the habitual temper of our lives.

Another important remark which flows from this conſideration, is that the leſſer moralities, however minute in their conſtituent particles, and however they may be paſſed over by the ſupercilious as unworthy regard, are of great importance in the eſtimate of human happineſs. It is rarely that the opportunity occurs for a man to confer on me a ſtriking benefit. But, every time that I meet him, he may demonſtrate his kindneſs, his ſympathy, and, by attentions almoſt too minute for calculation, add new vigour to the ſtream of complacence and philanthropy that circulates in my veins.

Hence it appears that the leſſer moralities are of moſt importance, where politeneſs is commonly leaſt thought of, in the boſom of family intercourſe, and where people have occaſion moſt conſtantly to aſſociate together. If I ſee the

the father of a family perpetually exerting himſelf for what he deems to be their welfare, if he give the moſt unequivocal proofs of his attachment, if he cannot hear of any miſchance happening to them without agony, at the ſame time that he is their deſpot and their terror, burſting out into all the fury of paſſion, or preſerving a ſour and painful moroſeneſs that checks all the kindly effuſions of their ſoul, I ſhall regard this man as an abortion, and I may reaſonably doubt whether, by his mode of proceeding, he does not traverſe their welfare in more reſpects than he promotes it.

Rouſſeau has obſerved that man is by nature unamiable. There is uſually ſomething ambiguous in the uſe of this term, nature. If he means that man, in the ſolitary ſtate of exiſtence in which he delights to deſcribe him, and which he repreſents as the perfection of a human being, has few of the ſocial affections, this cannot be diſputed. The ſavage ſtate, as it exiſts in ſome parts of Africa and America, is by no means deſtitute of affections. There are no where perhaps more affectionate fathers and huſbands. They love, as they hate, with uncommon energy and fervour. Their attachment to their gueſts, their benefactors, and their friends, is ardent and unalterable.

If

If therefore they appear in any reſpect unamiable, it is not becauſe they are more ſelfiſh, or have fewer affections, than the civiliſed nations of the world. It is ſimply becauſe their minds are not ſubtiliſed. It is becauſe their intellectual obſervation has not grown curious and microſcopical, and they ſee things only in maſſes and in the groſs. None more ready than they to perform trying ſervices, to expoſe themſelves to the fury of every element, to ſuffer all the privations and all the tortures of which our nature is ſuſceptible, for the advantage of thoſe they love. In theſe caſes they can identify themſelves with the object of their attachment. But they cannot do ſo in minuter and more ordinary matters. They have not analyſed the elements of the human mind, and ſcrutiniſed its hiſtory. Gulliver's Houyhnhnm is a ſavage, who cries repeatedly to the unfortunate wanderer to go faſter, and never diſcovers his incapacity or his pain, till it is in the moſt expreſs manner repreſented to him. Certain perſons calling themſelves philanthropiſts and patriots, are like the ſavages of which we treat, when they inſiſt almoſt excluſively upon the greater duties, and repreſent the petty kindneſſes of human life as ſcarcely worthy the regard of a citizen and a man.

Goldſmith

Goldſmith has introduced his Vicar of Wakefield as remarking, that he had ever been a great lover of happy human faces. Such will always be the feeling of him, whoſe heart is ſtored with the genuine affections of a man, and in whom cultivation has given inceſſant activity to philanthropy. How enviable is his ſtate, to whom every door that he frequents,

> Flies wide, and almoſt leaps from off its hinges,
> To give him entrance;——
> While his approaches make a little holiday,
> And every face is dreſs'd in ſmiles to meet him! ROWE.

This is one of the great circumſtances diſtinguiſhing between the civiliſed and the ſavage ſtate; the ſilent communication of the eye, the lively attention that marks every ſhade of gradation in another's pleaſure or pain, the nameleſs kindneſſes that perſuade the receiver more forcibly, or, at leaſt, more cordially, of the attachment of the performer, than great ſervices are ever enabled to do.

Again; in civiliſed ſociety there is a mutual harmony and correſpondence between the politeneſs of the active party, and the ſtate of ſenſation in the paſſive. In ſuch perſons particularly as have their minds early rouſed, whether accidentally, or by the judicious proceeding of their

their inſtitutor, and promiſe to be, in more than an ordinary degree, uſeful members of the commonwealth, it is inconceivable how numerous and delicate are their ſenſations, and how exquiſite is their feeling of pleaſure or pain. The ſlighteſt circumſtances, imperceptible to a common eye, and ſcarcely adverted to by the agent, often produce an indelible impreſſion. There is ſomething exceedingly deceitful in human nature in this reſpect. A ſhrinking ſenſibility will not ſeldom hide itſelf under an unaltered exterior. This is frequently illuſtrated in the education of children. If they are harſhly reproved, they diſdain perhaps to lament, they are too proud to change a muſcle, and we inwardly grieve for their impenetrable hardneſs, while their ſoul is ſecretly torn with conflicting, not ſeldom with dignified, emotions.

Nor is this ſenſibility by any means confined to perſons of extraordinary talents. The worm that we trample upon, writhes beneath our foot, and is agoniſed, though in ſilence. It is a trite obſervation that one perſon ſhall leſs humble his ſuitor by a refuſal, than another by compliance; ſo great is the importance that attaches itſelf to things apparently trivial. That man knows little of human nature, and is either endued with a very

very ſmall portion of ſenſibility, or is ſeldom in the habit of putting himſelf in the place of another; who is not forward in the practice of minute attentions. When a modeſt and unaſſured perſon enters a room, he is anxious about his geſtures, and feels the diſpoſition of every limb and feature as a ſort of weight upon his mind: A ſupercilious look, a dubious ſmile, an unceremonious accoſt, from one of the company, pierces him to the ſoul. On the contrary, at how cheap a rate may he be encouraged and made happy! What kind-hearted man would refuſe to procure eaſe for him at ſo ſmall an expence?

Perhaps the ſort of ſenſibility here deſcribed is to be regarded as a defect. Perhaps, upon a nice adjuſtment of the value of other men's good opinion on the one hand, and of independence on the other, we ſhall find that he ought to have been more firm and intrepid. But a judicious moraliſt will not be abrupt in the ſuppreſſion of ſenſibility. The form may be wrong, but the ſubſtance ought to remain. In a word, wherever civiliſation exiſts, ſenſibility will be its attendant; a ſenſibility, which cannot be ſatisfied without much kindneſs, nor without a kindneſs of that condeſcending nature, that conſiders the

whole chain of our feelings, and is deſirous, out of petty materials, to compoſe the ſum of our happineſs.

Politeneſs is not preciſely that ſcheme and ſyſtem of behaviour which can only be learned in the faſhionable world. There are many things in the ſyſtem of the faſhionable world, that are practiſed, not to encourage but depreſs, not to produce happineſs but mortification. Theſe, by whatever name they are called, are the reverſe of genuine politeneſs; and are accordingly commonly known by the denomination of rudeneſs, a word of exactly oppoſite application. Much true politeneſs may often be found in a cottage. It cannot however conſpicuouſly exiſt, but in a mind, itſelf unembarraſſed, and at liberty to attend to the feelings of others; and it is diſtinguiſhed by an open ingenuouſneſs of countenance, and an eaſy and flowing manner. It is therefore neceſſarily graceful. It may undoubtedly beſt be learned in the ſociety of the unembarraſſed, the eaſy and the graceful. It is moſt likely to exiſt among thoſe perſons who, delivered from the importunate preſſure of the firſt wants of our nature, have leiſure to attend to the delicate and evaneſcent touches of the ſoul.

Politeneſs has been ſaid to be the growth of courts,

courts, and a manner frank, abrupt and auſtere, to be congenial to a republic. If this aſſertion be true, it is a matter worthy of regret, and it will behove us to put it in the ſcale as a defect, to be weighed againſt the advantages that will reſult from a more equal and independent condition of mankind. It is however probably founded in miſtake. It does not ſeem reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the abolition of ſervility ſhould be the diminution of kindneſs; and it has already been obſerved that, where the powers of intellect are ſtrenuouſly cultivated, ſenſibility will be their attendant. But, in proportion to the acuteneſs of any man's feelings, will be, in a majority of caſes, his attention and deference to the feelings of others.

SECT.

SECT. II.

A REMARK not unfrequently heard from the profeſſed enemies of politeneſs, is, I diſlike ſuch a perſon; why ſhould I be at any pains to conceal it? Is it not right that the judgment of mankind reſpecting the character of individuals, ſhould be divulged? I wiſh to be underſtood. I feel in myſelf no vocation to be a hypocrite.

Are the perſons who hold this language, wholly unacquainted with the fallibility of human judgment? Be it obſerved, that they are uſually, of all their ſpecies, the moſt capricious, the moſt haſty in their judgments, and dogmatical in their deciſions. Sober and thinking men, are fearful of being miſled in a ſubject ſo complex and involved as the ſtudy of characters; and have no pleaſure in delivering their ſentiments in this matter, with rapidity of deciſion, and in a peremptory tone. They are wary and anxious in forming an opinion; and ſcepticiſm in enquiry, is eminently calculated to inſpire gentleneſs not imbecility, of delivery and behaviour. Perſons who are ſo ungraciouſly eager

to condemn a character, for the firſt diſpleaſing appearance, for the mereſt trifle, for any thing or for nothing, while they pretend to be doing homage at the ſhrine of ſincerity, will generally be found to be merely gratifying their own peeviſhneſs and the undue acrimony of their temper.

They do not recollect that the greater part of human virtue conſiſts in ſelf-government, and a reſolute counteraction of improper propenſities. When I check in myſelf an unmanly and inordinate lamentation for the loſs of a friend, which, being indulged, if I am a man of ſenſibility, would perhaps deſtroy me, who is there that will charge me with prevarication in this proceeding? When I refuſe to vent the feeling of bodily anguiſh in piercing cries, as the firſt impulſe would prompt me to do, I am not therefore a hypocrite. In the ſame manner, if I refuſe to treat any perſon with pointed contempt for every petty diſlike, and prefer the keeping my mind always free for the reception of new and oppoſite evidence, this is no breach of ſincerity.

This argument will appear in a ſtill ſtronger light, if we act upon the great rule of morality, and put ourſelves in the place of the individual concerned. On my part, ſuppoſe, I am eager to conform to a miſtaken law of ſincerity, but in

reality moſt probably am chiefly prompted by an unjuſt and imperious diſpoſition. How is it with my neighbour, whom I am forward to convince of the ſmall degree he occupies in my eſteem? He is placed in the moſt undeſirable predicament. He muſt either defend himſelf from my aſſault, by harbouring that unfavourable opinion of me, which eaſily degenerates into hate; or he muſt ſink, unrelieved, beneath one of the moſt humiliating and ſoul-harrowing feelings incident to our nature, that of having brought home, at once to his underſtanding and his ſenſes, the ill opinion and unfriendly ſentiment of a being of his own ſpecies. How lightly and thoughtleſsly is this deſolation frequently inflicted? An offence like this, nothing can aggravate, but the frigid and miſerable pretence of the offender, that what he did was the dictate of virtue.

A man conducts himſelf in a manner I diſapprove. I inſtantly expreſs my contempt towards him, perſonally, and in the moſt unqualified terms.—Who made me a judge over him? From what ſource did I derive my patent of infallibility? He was more concerned in the event, and poſſibly conſidered the ſubject more maturely and patiently than I have conſidered it. Toleration, and freedom of opinion, are ſcarcely

worth accepting, if, when my neighbour differs from me, I do not indeed burn him, but I take every occaſion to inſult him. There could be no freedom of opinion, if every one conducted himſelf thus. Toleration in its full import, requires, not only that there ſhall be no laws to reſtrain opinion, but that forbearance and liberality ſhall be moulded into the manners of the community.

Suppoſing it certain that the man I cenſure is a perſon of depraved character, is this the way to amend him? Is there no conduct that offers itſelf, but that of puniſhment? How often does the loud cenſure, and the "ſlow-moving finger of ſcorn *," drive a man to deſpair, who might have been amended, perhaps rendered the ornament of his ſpecies? I ought to reclaim my brother with kindneſs and love, not to have recourſe to meaſures of inſolence and contumely.

This will be ſtill more evident, if we admit the doctrine of a moral neceſſity, and believe that there is an uniform and conſtant conjunction between motives and actions. Upon this hypotheſis, the man who acts improperly, has a certain train of reaſoning on the ſubject by which his mind is reconciled to the deviation. His underſtanding is impoſed on; there is a cloud

* Shakeſpear.

of

of ſophiſtry which reſts upon it. How ſhall this be diſperſed? In what manner ſhall truth be inſtilled into his mind? Certainly, with the diſpaſſionateneſs of argument, and that conciliation of manners which ſhall beſt win on his patience. Who ever thought of enlightening his pupil in the truths of geometry, by tranſports of rage, or by the cool and biting ſarcaſms of contempt? If I perceive my neighbour miſtaking in ſome important queſtion, I may pity him: a madman only would be filled with the bitterneſs of perſonal reſentment.

There is a remark ſufficiently memorable which may be deduced from the preceding obſervations. How far is it compatible with benevolence, that I ſhould ſpeak of a man's character, when he is abſent, and preſent, in the ſame terms? In anſwering this queſtion it may be premiſed that ſincerity is a matter of inferior conſideration to benevolence. Sincerity is only a means; and is valuable ſo far as it anſwers the purpoſes of benevolence; benevolence is ſubſtantive *.

Perhaps,

* What is here ſaid of ſincerity, is equally true of temperance, activity, perſeverance, and every other quality or habit that tends to promote our own happineſs, or the happineſs of others. They are merely ſubordinate and miniſterial

Perhaps, in the nature of things, there is no contrariety, as to the common intercourſes of life, between the ſpecies of ſincerity here ſpoken of, and benevolence. A wiſe man would ſpeak of the qualities of his neighbour as he found them; "nothing extenuate, nor ſet down aught in malice*." He would not, even in his neighbour's abſence, indulge in ſarcaſtic remarks at his expence; he would not exaggerate his errors; he would not ſpeak of them with anger and invective. On the other hand, his neighbour, if reaſonable, would bear to be told of his errors, in plain terms, without ſoftening or circumlocution. So that the language to be uſed, when I ſpoke to him if preſent, or of him if abſent, might be reduced to one common ſtandard.

Great inconveniences ariſe from the prevailing practice of inſincerity in this reſpect. Its appearances have not failed to be ſeized by the writers of comedy, as a rich fund of humour; and, with a little exaggeration upon the common modes, nothing can be more irreſiſtibly ludicrous. The variation of tone that a man

to this great purpoſe. Sincerity is one of theſe habits; but, though to benevolence it is only miniſterial, it is probably entitled to the very firſt place among its miniſters.

* Shakeſpear.

aſſumes,

aſſumes, when the perſon of whom he was talking unexpectedly makes his entrance, certainly places the ſpeaker in a pitiful point of view. Yet this inſincerity is in a greater or leſs degree univerſal; and, if we occaſionally meet with a man who, detected in the fact, repeats the ſame harſh language to the perſon upon his entrance, it may be doubted whether this proceeding is not rather dictated to him by the ſudden irritation of his pride, than by any ſhade or modification of benevolence.

From hence it has grown into a commonly received rule of civiliſed life, that converſation is not to be repeated, particularly to the perſons who may happen to be the ſubject of it. This rule appears at firſt ſight to be a very ſtrange one. Every man ſeems to have a juſt right to know what his neighbours think, or, to uſe a more appropriate phraſe, how they feel, reſpecting him; and certainly no information can be more intereſting. The judgment of his neighbours, is the glaſs in which he ſhould view himſelf; by this mirror he ſhould dreſs his mind, and remove his defects. Not that he ſhould implicitly conform himſelf to their judgment; but that, by comparing their opinions with each other and with his own, he will beſt arrive at the truth.

Ignorance in this reſpect corrupts the very vitals of human intercourſe. A man frequently does not know what is the opinion entertained of him by his moſt familiar companion; he is the object of his daily ridicule, and does not ſuſpect it. Yet the knowledge of this opinion is of high importance, both for correction and confidence. Many men go out of the world, profoundly unacquainted with the unanimous ſentiment of all their acquaintance reſpecting them.

The rule however, that converſation is not indiſcriminately to be repeated, has ſomething which may be offered in its behalf. If from knowing what all men ſaid of him in his abſence, a perſon could learn what they thought of him, it were much to be wiſhed he ſhould know it, and that man would be a poltroon who would ſhrink from the having his remarks divulged. But there are ſo many things ſaid from the mere wantonneſs of the moment, or from a deſire to comply with the tone of the company; ſo many from the impulſe of paſſion, or the deſire to be brilliant; ſo many idle exaggerations which the heart, in a moment of ſobriety, would diſavow; that frequently the perſon concerned would learn any thing ſooner than the opinion entertained of him, and torment himſelf, as injuries of the deepeſt

deepeſt dye, with things, injudicious perhaps and cenſurable, but which were the mere ſallies of thoughtleſs levity.

It has been already ſeen that, were we in a ſtate of ſufficient improvement, the moſt perfect ſincerity in our language reſpecting the characters of men, would be practicable. It is not at preſent however to be expected, whether we conſider it as it relates to the ſpeaker, or to the perſon who, in his abſence, happens to be the ſubject of diſcourſe.

It has ſometimes been laid down as a rule, that we ought never to ſpeak ill of a perſon in his abſence. But this is ridiculous. Characters, in order to be ſufficiently underſtood, ought pertinaciouſly to be diſcuſſed. There is no duty more clear and unqueſtionable, than that I ought to endeavour to enlighten my neighbour reſpecting the character of another, and to guard him againſt the ill effect of his vices and infirmities. The error therefore does not lie in my ſpeaking ill of a perſon in his abſence.

There is ſcarcely any ſpeaker ſo careful of his words, as never to indulge in wanton ſallies, in deſcanting on the infirmities of another. There is ſcarcely any ſpeaker who, in ſuch caſes, does not occaſionally indulge in invective, and deſcribe the vices of another with that anger and unkindneſs,

unkindneſs, which an exalted humanity would teach him to regard as an inſult. Theſe ſallies and this invective are cenſurable in whatever way they are conſidered; but they not ſeldom change their character and become atrocious, when related to the perſon who is the ſubject of them.

Again; as the ſpeaker is frail and imperfect, ſo alſo is the perſon whoſe errors are the ſubject of diſcourſe. There are few men at preſent who can endure to have their errors detailed to them in a plain and unvarniſhed manner. Yet it is my duty, ſo far as opportunity ſerves, to acquaint them with their errors. The medium I ſhall obſerve, will be to endeavour by every obvious method to render my tale palatable to them; and particularly to accompany it with proofs of kindneſs, which probably I little thought of when I ſpoke of their faults in their abſence. Though the ſubject be the ſame, my ſtyle of treating it will therefore be conſiderably different.

From theſe obſervations it appears that politeneſs, properly conſidered, is no enemy to admonition. There is indeed a weak and half-witted humanity, that refuſes to incur the poſſibility of inflicting pain upon its neighbour, where it can be avoided; and would rather allow him to incur the moſt ſerious inconvenience, than

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riſk the appearing to his recollection an ungracious monitor. But it is the office of virtue, to view pleaſure and pain in a more comprehenſive way, and to prefer for another, as for one's ſelf, the leſs evil to the greater. True politeneſs is a branch of virtue; and the corner-ſtone upon which it reſts, is, in the minuter and continually recurring incidents of human life, to ſeek to ſecure to its neighbour the greateſt ſum of pleaſurable ſenſation, with the leaſt balance of painful.

Why is admonition ſo frequently unpalatable? Not ſo much, as lord Shafteſbury has well obſerved *, becauſe few people know how to take advice, as becauſe ſtill fewer know how to give it. The monitor uſually aſſumes the tone of a maſter. At this uſurpation human independence reaſonably ſpurns. The countenance compoſed to unuſual gravity, and a peculiar ſolemnity of voice fitted to the occaſion, cannot fail to alarm and revolt every man of an ingenuous temper. Why this parade, this triumphal entry as if into a conquered province? Why treat a moral or a practical truth, in a way ſo different from truths of any other kind? There is a difference of opinion between me and the perſon whoſe conduct I apprehend to be imprudent or erroneous. Why

* Characteriſtics, Vol. I, Eſſay III.

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not diſcuſs this difference upon equal terms? Why not ſuppoſe that I may be ignorant of a part of the queſtion? Why not, as is reaſonable, offer what occurs to me, rather as a hint for enquiry, than as a deciſion emanating from an oracle of truth? Why not truſt rather to the reaſon of the caſe, than to the arts or the paſſion with which I may inforce it?

"But I wiſh to leave a ſerious impreſſion." Am I ſo ignorant as to ſuppoſe that a large, ſober and bland view of the ſubject, will not produce this effect? Do I imagine that a greater impreſſion ought to be produced, than can thus be produced?

It may further be objected, "I am perfectly ſure of the grounds upon which I proceed; why ſhould I be expected to play the hypocrite, and pretend to be uncertain?" To this it can only be anſwered, It ought not to be expected from you, ſince you ſhow yourſelf thus ignorant of the firſt principles of morality and reaſon. The firſt principle of reaſon, and that which ought particularly to modify my practical judgments, is, that I ſhould diſtruſt myſelf and the completeneſs of my information, both in point of argument and fact.

It is ſcarcely neceſſary in this place to enter a caveat againſt miſapprehenſion, under the form

of an eulogium upon the virtue of ſincerity. Without habits of entire, unqualified ſincerity, the human character can never be raiſed to its true eminence. It gives what nothing elſe can ſo effectually give, an aſſured, unembarraſſed and ingenuous manner. It is the true progenitor of contentment, and of the complacency with which a virtuous man ſhould be able to advert to his modes of proceeding. Inſincerity corrupts and empoiſons the ſoul of the actor, and is of pernicious example to every ſpectator.

Yet ſincerity ought not to be practiſed ſolely for its own ſake. The man who thinks only how to preſerve his ſincerity, is a glaringly imperfect character. He feels not for the ſuffering, and ſympathiſes not in the deliverance of others, but is actuated ſolely by a ſelfiſh and cold-hearted pride. He cares not whom he inſults, nor whom he injures. There is nothing againſt which it behoves a well-intentioned man to be more upon his guard, than the miſtaking a part for the whole, or the ſubſtituting a branch of the tree of beneficence, for the root from which it is derived.

Politeneſs however, as has abundantly appeared, is, in its genuine ſenſe, ſeldom or never at variance with ſincerity. Sincerity in its principle, is nearer, and in more direct communication with, the root of virtue, utility, than politeneſs

liteneſs can ever be. The original purpoſe of ſincerity, without which it is no more than idle rant and myſticiſm, is to provide for the cardinal intereſts of a human being, the great ſtamina of his happineſs. The purpoſe of politeneſs is of a humbler nature. It follows in the ſame direction, like a gleaner in a corn-field, and picks up and huſbands thoſe ſmaller and ſcattered ears of happineſs, which the pride of Stoiciſm, like the pride of wealth, condeſcended not to obſerve.

ESSAY

ESSAY XI.

OF LEARNING.

IF we examine with a curious and attentive eye thoſe individuals who may be ſaid to have in any degree exerted themſelves for the improvement of their intellectual faculties, we ſhall find ourſelves eaſily able to diſtinguiſh thoſe who are uſually denominated the ſelf-educated, from every other deſcription of mentally induſtrious perſons.

By the ſelf-educated in this place I would underſtand, not merely thoſe who have not paſſed through the regular forms of a liberal education; I include, in addition to this, the notion of their not having engaged in any methodical and perſevering courſe of reading, but devoted themſelves rather to the labour of inveſtigating their own thoughts, than the thoughts of others.

Theſe perſons are well worthy of the intercourſe and careful obſervation of men who are deſirous of embracing every means of adding to their own ſtock of knowledge. There is a ſtriking independence of mind about them. There

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is a ſort of audaciouſneſs of thinking, that has a moſt happy tendency to counteract that ſtationarineſs and ſacredneſs of opinion which is too apt to inſinuate itſelf among mankind. New thoughts, daring opinions, intrepid enquiries, are thus ſet afloat, upon which more diſciplined minds would perhaps ſcarcely have ventured. There is frequently a happineſs in their reflections, that flaſhes light and conviction upon us at once.

Yet ſuch perſons are often wholly, perhaps always very conſiderably, deficient in the art of reaſoning. There is no ſufficient arrangement in their arguments, or lucidneſs in their order. Often they aſſign reaſons wholly foreign to the queſtion; often they omit in ſilence, ſteps the moſt material to their demonſtration, and which none but the acuteſt auditor can ſupply; and this, not becauſe they forgot them, but becauſe they never at any time occurred to their minds. They ſtrain words and phraſes in ſo novel a manner as altogether to calumniate their meaning, and their diſcourſe muſt be tranſlated into the vernacular tongue, before we can fairly make trial of its merits. Their ideas, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, are ſo Pindarical and unmethodiſed, that our chief wonder is at the felicity and wiſdom which mixes itſelf among

among them. They furniſh however rather materials of thinking, than proofs of the truth or falſhood of any propoſition; and, if we adopt any of their aſſertions, we are often obliged to reject their imaginary demonſtrations, and invent demonſtrations of our own altogether different.

In the mean time this is the favourable ſide of the picture. Many of the ſelf-educated ſtudy themſelves into a ſort of inſanity. They are not only incoherent in their thoughts, and wild in their language: often they adopt opinions the moſt unequivocally viſionary, and talk a language, not merely unintelligible to others, but which is put together in ſo fantaſtic and myſtical a way, that it is impoſſible it ſhould be the repreſentative of wiſdom in themſelves.

There is another feature peculiarly characteriſtical of the ſelf-educated. Reflecting men of a different deſcription, are frequently ſceptical in their opinions. They have ſo carefully entered into the very ſouls of the authors they read, and ſo minutely followed out the whole train of their reaſonings, as to enable them to do full juſtice to an antagoniſt's argument. But this to a ſelf-educated man is impoſſible. He has therefore no doubts. If he is tolerant, it is leſs in conſequence of feeling the weakneſs of human un-

derſtanding and the inevitable varieties of human opinion, than through the medium of an abſtract ſpeculation, or a generous conſciouſneſs, leaning to the ſide of toleration. It will be ſtrange if, ſo far as relates to converſation and the ordinary intercourſe of human life, he be not frequently betrayed into intolerance. It will be ſtrange, if he do not prove in many inſtances, impatient of contradiction, and inurbane and ungenerous in his cenſures of thoſe by whom he is oppoſed.

It is too common a feature with all diſputants, that they think only of their own arguments, and liſten, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, only to themſelves. It is not their purpoſe to try whether they may not themſelves be convicted of error; they are merely intent upon convincing and changing the mind of the perſon who differs from them. This, which is too frequent a fault with all men, is peculiarly incident to the ſelf-educated. The generality of men of talent and reflection, were taught firſt by liſtening to other men's ideas, and ſtudying other men's writings. The wildneſs of their nature, and the ſtubbornneſs of their minds, have by long practice been broken into a capacity of candid attention. If I talk to ſuch men, I do not talk in vain. But, if I talk to a ſelf-educated man, it

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too often happens that I am talking to the air. He has no ſuſpicion that I may poſſibly be in the right, and therefore no curioſity to know what is capable of being alleged in favour of my opinion. A truly ludicrous ſpectacle would be to ſee two ſuch men talking together, each hearing himſelf only, and each, however he may cover it with an exterior politeneſs, deaf to the pretenſions of his antagoniſt.

From this deſcription of a ſelf-educated man it may ſafely be inferred, that I ought to wiſh any young perſon in whoſe future eminence I intereſt myſelf, rather occaſionally to aſſociate with individuals of this deſcription, than to be one of their body himſelf.

It ought however to be remarked that, whatever rank the ſelf-educated man may hold among perſons who have exerted themſelves for the improvement of their intellectual faculties, he will always, if judicious and able, be regarded by the diſcerning with peculiar reſpect, inaſmuch as there has been much more of voluntary in his acquiſitions, than can well have fallen to the ſhare of thoſe who have enjoyed every advantage of inſtitution and ſcientifical incitement.

There is a kind of declamation very generally afloat in the world, which, if it could be taken as juſt and well founded, would prove that the ſelf-

educated, inſtead of labouring under the important diſadvantages here enumerated, were the moſt fortunate of men, and thoſe upon whom the hopes of their ſpecies, whether for inſtruction or delight, ſhould principally be fixed.

How much eloquent invective has been ſpent in holding up to ridicule the generation of book-worms! We have been told, that a perſevering habit of reading, kills the imagination, and narrows the underſtanding; that it overloads the intellect with the notions of others and prevents its digeſting them, and, by a ſtill ſtronger reaſon, prevents it from unfolding its native powers; that the man who would be original and impreſſive, muſt meditate rather than hear, and walk rather than read. He that devotes himſelf to a methodical proſecution of his ſtudies, is perhaps allowed ſome praiſe for his induſtry and good intention; but it is at the ſame time inſinuated, that the only reſult to be expected from ſuch ill-placed induſtry, is a plentiful harveſt of laborious dulneſs.

It is no wonder that this ſort of declamation has been generally popular. It favours one of the moſt fundamental paſſions of the human mind, our indolence. To acquaint ourſelves profoundly with what other men have thought in different ages of the world, is an arduous taſk;

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the aſcent of the hill of knowledge is ſteep, and it demands the moſt unalterable reſolution to be able to conquer it. But this declamation preſents to us every diſcouragement, and ſevers all the nerves of the ſoul. He that is infected by it, no longer "girds up the loins of his mind *;" but ſurrenders his days to unenterpriſing indulgence. Its effect is like that of a certain religious creed, which, diſclaiming the connection between motives and action, and between one action and another, inſtructs its votaries to wait, with pious reſignation, for the influx of a ſupernatural ſtrength which is to ſuperſede the benefit of our vigilance and exertions.

Nothing however can be more ill founded than this imputed hoſtility between learning and genius. If it were true, it is among ſavages only that we ought to ſeek for the genuine expanſion of the human mind. They are, of all their kind, the moſt undebauched by learning, and the leaſt broken in upon by any regular habits of attention. In civiliſed ſociety, and eſpecially among that claſs in civiliſed ſociety who pay any attention to intellectual purſuits, thoſe who have the greateſt antipathy to books, are yet modified in a thouſand ways by the actual ſtate of literature.

* 1 Peter, Chap. I, ver. 13.

They converſe with men who read, though they diſdain to read themſelves. A ſagacious obſerver might infer beforehand, in its principal outlines, what a ſelf-educated man could do, from a previous knowledge of the degree of improvement exiſting in the country he inhabited. Man in ſociety is variouſly influenced by the characters of his fellow men; he is an imitative animal, and, like the camelion, owes the colour he aſſumes, to the colour of the ſurrounding objects. But, if men the moſt auſterely and cynically independent in this reſpect, muſt be ſo deeply affected by literature and books at ſecond hand, it were ſurely better to go at once to the fountain-head, and drink of the ſpring in all its purity.

The opinion here combated, ſeems to have originated in the moſt profound ignorance of the intellectual nature of man. Man taken by himſelf is nothing. In the firſt portion of his life, he is more ignorant and worthleſs than the beaſts. For all that he has, he is indebted to colliſion. His mother and his nurſe awaken his mind from its primeval ſleep. They imbue it in various reſpects with ſubtlety and diſcrimination. They unfold the underſtanding, and rouſe in turn the whole catalogue of the paſſions.

The remaining ſections of the hiſtory of man,

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are like the firſt. He proceeds forward, as he commenced. All his improvements have communication for their ſource.

Why are men not always ſavages? Becauſe they build upon one another's ſtructures. Becauſe "one man labours, and other men enter into the fruits of his labour *." It is thus that the ſpecies collectively ſeems formed to advance, and one generation, caſualties and extraordinary revolutions being excepted, to improve upon the attainments of another. The ſelf-educated man ſeems to propoſe, as far as poſſible, to diveſt himſelf of this fundamental advantage.

If I would do well in any art or ſcience, I ſhould think nothing could be more neceſſary for me, than carefully to enquire in the firſt inſtance what had been done already. I ſhould otherwiſe moſt likely only write over again in a worſe manner, what had been repeatedly written before I was born. It would be the moſt atrocious abſurdity to affirm, that books may be of uſe to other men, but not to an author. He of all men wants them moſt. If on the other hand they be without utility, for what reaſon is he an author?

The principle of all judgment and taſte, is

* John, Chap. IV, ver. 38.

compariſon. A man of the ſoundeſt texture of mind, would neceſſarily admire the weakeſt imitations, if he had ſeen no better. If I would be a painter, I ought to look, with attentive reſearch, into the works of Angelo, and Titian, and Rubens, and Raffaele. If I would be an hiſtorian, I ought to have obſerved the manner of Herodotus, and Thucydides, and Tacitus, and Livy, or of other eminent hiſtorians. If I would be a writer of tragedies, I ſhall do well to examine the labours of Sophocles, and Shakeſpear, and Otway, and Racine. Theſe men undoubtedly profited by the ſucceſs and miſcarriages of their predeceſſors.

The doctrine that firſt brought this mode of cultivation into diſrepute, was that which affirmed genius to be a kind of inſpiration, a ſupererogatory and prodigious gift of heaven, and not produced in the ordinary train of cauſes and effects. This doctrine is not likely to meet with reſpectable ſupport in the preſent age. Natural philoſophy has baniſhed prodigies from the material world; and the prodigies of the intellectual world muſt inevitably follow. It will now probably be admitted, that all knowledge makes its approach through the ſenſes, and that, if we find any intellectual faculties peculiarly ſubtiliſed

and

and animated, it muſt have been through the medium of various concurring circumſtances, and by the operation of innumerable ſucceſſive incitements.

The idea, that cultivation and induſtry are eſſential to excellence, ſeems now to be more generally admitted in the art of painting, than in many of the arts of writing. But the ſame reaſons would ſhow that it was equally true of the one as of the other.

It is extraordinary that any man ſhould have ſuppoſed attention inimical to excellence. What a protracted train of unintermitted attention does conſiderable excellence demand? It is the buſineſs of the man who would exhibit it, to produce ſomething new, to ſtate what he has to ſay in a manner better than it has yet been ſtated, to hold forth ſome view of his ſubject that never yet occurred to any of his predeceſſors, to deliver what ſhall arreſt the attention of a numerous portion of mankind and fix their attention. Surely this is no ſportful taſk. It is a burthen fit for the ſhoulders of Atlas.

If I would write a poem, a play, or any other work of fiction, how numerous are the points I have to conſider? How judiciouſly muſt I ſelect the topic I would treat? How carefully muſt I reflect upon the

——*quid*

———*quid ferre recuſent,*
Quid valeant humeri *?* HOR.

What a comprehenſive view muſt I take of my ſubject? How accurately ought I to perceive the parts, or branches, as they extend themſelves from the trunk, each conſtituting a well arranged and beautiful whole of itſelf, yet each depending, for its exiſtence and its form, upon the root by which the entire maſs is ſuſtained? From how many ſciences ought my illuſtrations to be drawn? There is ſcarcely any one branch of knowledge, however apparently remote, from which my work might not be improved, and my ignorance of which will not be apparent to a diſcerning eye. Laſtly, ſtyle is a circumſtance without which, except in extraordinary caſes, no work can expect any permanent ſucceſs. How carefully ought this to be refined and elaborated? Not ſo much elaborated by any effort to be exerted at the moment, as by a long train of previous conſiderations, which have familiariſed to the mind beauties the moſt uncommon and exquiſite. What a copious maſs of knowledge, previouſly accumulated, do all theſe particulars imply?

* What ſuits my Genius; what my Strength can bear.
FRANCIS.

When

When we compare the knowledge of any ſubject to be acquired from books, with that to be acquired from converſation, it is aſtoniſhing how unequal they will ordinarily be found. Books undertake to treat of a ſubject regularly; to unfold it part by part till the whole is ſurveyed; they are entirely at our devotion, and may be turned backward and forward as we pleaſe; it is their expreſs purpoſe to omit nothing that is eſſential to a complete delineation. They are written in tranquillity, and in the boſom of meditation: they are reviſed again and again; their obſcurities removed, and their defects ſupplied. Converſation on the other hand is fortuitous and runs wild; the life's blood of truth is filtrated and diluted, till much of its eſſence is gone. The intellect that depends upon converſation for nutriment, may be compared to the man who ſhould prefer the precarious exiſtence of a beggar, to the poſſeſſion of a regular and ſubſtantial income.

One of the moſt prevailing objections to a ſyſtematical purſuit of knowledge, is that it impoſes upon us a methodical induſtry, and by conſequence counteracts the more unlicenſed and dignified ſallies of the mind. But the induſtry which books demand, is of the ſame ſpecies

cies as the induſtry requiſite for the development of our own reflections; the ſtudy of other men's writings, is ſtrikingly analogous to the invention and arrangement of our own. A better ſchool cannot be deviſed for the improvement of individual mind, than for it thus to collate itſelf with other minds in a ſtate of the higheſt and moſt perſevering exertion. It is to be feared that, if induſtry be not early formed, and if that indolence, which in one form or other is always our motive for neglecting books and learning, be uniformly indulged, the mind will never rouſe itſelf to an undaunted ſubtlety of thought, or acquire the conſtancy requiſite for the invention and execution of any great undertaking.

The reaſon why reading has fallen into a partial diſrepute is, that few men have ſufficiently reflected on the true mode of reading. It has been affirmed by aſtronomers, that the ſpots diſcoverable in the diſk of the ſun, are a ſpecies of fuel calculated to ſupply its continual waſte, and that, in due time, they become changed into the ſubſtance of the ſun itſelf. Thus in reading: if the ſyſtems we read, were always to remain in maſſes upon the mind, unconcocted and unaltered, undoubtedly in that caſe they would only deform

deſorm it. But, if we read in a juſt ſpirit, perhaps we cannot read too much: in other words, if we mix our own reflections with what we read; if we diſſect the ideas and arguments of our author; if, by having recourſe to all ſubſidiary means, we endeavour to clear the recollection of him in our minds; if we compare part with part, detect his errors, new model his ſyſtems, adopt ſo much of him as is excellent, and explain within ourſelves the reaſon of our diſapprobation as to what is otherwiſe. A judicious reader will have a greater number of ideas that are his own paſſing through his mind, than of ideas preſented to him by his author. He ſifts his merits, and bolts his arguments. What he adopts from him, he renders his own, by repaſſing in his thoughts the notions of which it conſiſts, and the foundation upon which it reſts, correcting its miſtakes, and ſupplying its defects. Even the moſt dogmatical branches of ſtudy, grammar and mathematics, ſupply him with hints, and give a turn to his meditations. Reading and learning, when thus purſued, not only furniſh the moſt valuable knowledge; but afford incitements to the mind of a thouſand denominations, and add a miraculous ſort of finiſhing to its workmanſhip which could have been beſtowed by no other means. It furniſhes, what is of all

things

things moſt important, occaſions for approbation and diſapprobation. It creates a certain manlineſs of judgment, not indebted for its deciſive character to partiality and arrogance, but ſeeing truth by its own light, even while it never diveſts itſelf of the ſobriety of ſcepticiſm, and accommodated to the office of producing conviction in its intimates and hearers.

To prevent miſconſtruction it is perhaps neceſſary to obſerve, that the tendency of this Eſſay is to recommend learning. It proceeds upon the ſuppoſition that there is a claſs, and a numerous claſs of men, by whom ſevere and profound reading is decried. The term ſelf-educated, was defined in the beginning, to mean thoſe who had not engaged in any methodical and perſevering courſe of reading; and elſewhere it was ſaid of them that they held, that the man who would be original and impreſſive, muſt meditate rather than hear, and walk rather than read. If there be any ſingularity in this uſe of the term, it is hoped at leaſt that the reader will not put a ſenſe upon it in this preſent inſtance, which is foreign to the intention of the writer. He is far from thinking all men of learning reſpectable, and he joins moſt cordially in the general propenſity to withhold from the mere pedant every degree of eſtimation. The prin-

ciples intended to be maintained are, that learning is the ally, not the adverſary of genius; and that he who reads in a proper ſpirit, can ſcarcely read too much.

ESSAY

ESSAY XII.

OF ENGLISH STYLE.

SECT. I.

Introduction.

NO literary enquiry can be more intereſting to an inhabitant of Great-Britain, than that reſpecting the hiſtory of the Engliſh language, and particularly that branch of its hiſtory, which may enable us to decide, at what time it has been written and ſpoken in the greateſt purity and perfection.

The ſtream of opinion ſeems to be unfavourable to the age in which we live. The judgment of Swift and the moſt eminent writers in the firſt part of the preſent century, ſeems to have been, that the period of queen Elizabeth was the golden age of the Engliſh language. Aſk the ſcholars and men of taſte of the preſent day; they will perhaps for the moſt part give their ſuffrage to the reign of queen Anne.

Men of taſte of the preſent day think they ſee, as Swift believed he ſaw before them, the influx of a corrupt and barbarous ſtyle. The mode of writing which is now practiſed, we are told, is dazzling and gaudy, not of intrinſic value. Our language is infected with a motley train of foreign phraſeology. We adopt expreſſions with eagerneſs, which, at the ſame time that they are oppoſed to all juſt analogy, are in their own nature bad and contemptible. We hunt after unreal beauties. The dignified ſimplicity, which characteriſed the language of our foreſathers, is no more.

It may be allowable to ſuſpect the juſtice of this invective, when it is recollected, how univerſally the prejudice has ſpread, in favour of former times and diſtant ages. This prejudice has however ſuffered grievous defalcations. It is pretty generally acknowledged, that ſcience and the improvement of the human mind, are in a progreſſive ſtate. It has come to be vehemently ſuſpected, that the political maxims and the moral conduct of our anceſtors, were not altogether ſo perfect as they have been repreſented. May it not then happen, that the opinion in favour of their language may prove equally haſty and unfounded?

It is the purpoſe of this Eſſay to ſhow, that

the Engliſh language was never in ſo high a ſtate of purity and perfection, as in the preſent reign of king George the third.

This can only be ſatisfactorily done by adducing a ſeries of inſtances.

We will confine ourſelves to proſe examples. The licence of poetry, and the fetters of verſification, have equally in all ages reduced the poets, in ſome degree to deviate from the received language of the age in which they wrote.

Before we enter upon our examples, let us endeavour to fix an idea of the laws of juſt compoſition or ſtyle.

And here I would lay it down as a maxim, that the beauty of ſtyle conſiſts in this, to be free from unneceſſary parts and excreſcencies, and to communicate our ideas with the ſmalleſt degree of prolixity and circuitouſneſs. Style ſhould be the tranſparent envelop of our thoughts; and, like a covering of glaſs, is defective, if, by any knots and ruggedneſs of ſurface, it introduce an irregularity and obliquity into the appearances of an object, not proper to the object itſelf. The forming of an excellent compoſition, may be compared to the office of a ſtatuary according to the fanciful idea of one of the ancients, who affirmed, that the ſtatue was all along in the block of marble, and the artiſt did nothing more than

remove

remove thoſe parts which intercepted our view of it. If he left any portion of the marble which ought to have been cut away, the ſtatue was in ſome degree disfigured.

In the mean while this maxim is not to be ſo conſtrued as to recommend or vindicate the cutting away any words or expreſſions that are neceſſary to render the grammatical conſtruction of a ſentence complete. As little does it apply to thoſe metaphors and ornaments of compoſition, which ſhall be found to increaſe the clearneſs or force with which an author's ideas are communicated to his readers. It applies only to thoſe ſuperfluities which, like dead fleſh upon the limb of a human body, would call upon the ſkilful ſurgeon for the exerciſe of the knife or the cauſtic.

The writers of the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth centuries had for the moſt part a cuſtom*, of entering upon their ſubject with an enumeration of the branches into which, as they ſuppoſed, it moſt naturally divided itſelf, or rather into which the genus of which it was a branch divided itſelf; and then dwelling, with tedious accuracy and minuteneſs, upon thoſe parts which in no

* See Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, &c. &c. &c.

ſort belonged to their purpoſe, but which they thought muſt be deſcribed, becauſe they were connected with it. This is an inſupportable fault. It is formal, phlegmatic and repulſive. It detains us painfully in diſcuſſing all thoſe things which we had no deſire to know, and then diſmiſſes us with a tired attention to conſider what was material to the purpoſe. A ſkilful writer proceeds directly to his object. He ſhakes off with vigorous exertion every thing that would impede him*, every thing that is, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the words, foreign and digreſſive.

The bad taſte which diſplays itſelf in the phraſes of the old writers, is of a ſimilar nature to the bad taſte which diſplays itſelf in the plan of their compoſitions. It is an ill mode of compoſition, where we find an author expreſſing his thought in ten words, when it might have been expreſſed with equal diſcrimination and grammatical propriety in five. The five additional words are ſo much dead and worthleſs matter mixed up with the true and genuine ſubſtance. They cloud

* Sweet, rouſe yourſelf, and the weak, wanton Cupid
Shall from your neck unlooſe his amorous fold,
And, like a dew-drop from the lion's mane,
Be ſhook to air. SHAKESPEAR.

the

the underſtanding, and are an inconceivable bar againſt paſſion and ſympathy. Nothing wil upon examination appear more certain, than that the forcible expreſſion of paſſion demands cloſeneſs and compreſſion. This is ſo true, that it will be found impoſſible to convey a great and electrical burſt of the ſoul, in phraſes, in which polyſyllabic words, words, as Horace calls them, of a foot and a half long*, are freely employed. It is not only neceſſary in this reſpect for the poet and the orator, where they would give their ſtrongeſt ſhocks, to diveſt themſelves of unneceſſary words, but even of unneceſſary ſyllables.

Another fault, which is perhaps more or leſs imputable to every Engliſh writer before the preſent age, is, that they were prone to tell their ſtory or unfold their argument in a relaxed and disjointed ſtyle, more reſembling the illiterate effuſions of the nurſe or the ruſtic, than thoſe of a man of delicate perceptions and claſſical cultivation, who watched with nice attention the choice of his words and the arrangement of his phraſes. The Engliſh language has lately aſſumed a loftier port. We may now often meet with it, though ſimple and elegant, yet with its nerves well ſtrung, and its ſtep at once ſkilful and

* *Seſquipedalia verba.*

firm. It is not unfrequent in examining an accidental pamphlet, or a news-paper correſpondence, to find the language characteriſed by that clearneſs, propriety and compreſſion, which command our thoughts, and ſeize upon a portion of our eſteem.

One thing further is to be obſerved before we proceed immediately to the ſubject. It has been already ſaid, that the only ſatisfactory way of determining the queſtion, is by adducing a ſeries of inſtances. Theſe inſtances therefore will form the main body of our diſquiſition. It ſeems proper for the moſt part that they ſhould be left with the reader, and ſuffered to make their own impreſſion.

Some readers indeed might feel diſpoſed to call upon the critic, "to declare his particular objections to the paſſages cited, to diſſect their grammar, analyſe their conſtruction, and deſcant upon each individual error by which they may be ſuppoſed to be characteriſed."

The reaſons that diſſuade us from a compliance with this demand, are as follow.

It is obvious to remark how tedious the diſquiſition would by this means be rendered, and that an eſſay, already ſufficiently long, would thus be ſwelled beyond all bounds of proportion.

But this is not all.

Minute

Minute criticiſm is a thing particularly deceitful. If a man will give himſelf the trouble to be ſufficiently refined and ſubtle in his remarks, it is paſt doubt that no writer will ſtand his examination. All terms were terms of ſenſe, before they were terms of abſtraction. If therefore we are reſolved to reduce the words of our author to their original meaning, we ſhall find mixt metaphors and incongruities in every page. Even in grammar, a topic ſuſceptible of greater correctneſs, if we were to follow the rule of the Bible, He that is without ſin among you, let him throw the firſt ſtone*; the firſt ſtone would never be thrown. Innumerable are the faults, that ſupineneſs engenders, or that human vigilance is inadequate to counteract†, which deform every literary compoſition that ever was produced. It is inconceivable how much the inexpert or thoughtleſs reader is, in this reſpect, at the mercy of the wanton or malicious critic, who ſcatters his own filth upon a compoſition, and then bids us note its deformity.

But the object of our preſent enquiry is foreign to this exquiſiteneſs of remark. The appeal lies to thoſe glaring and prominent features,

* John, Chap. viii, ver. 7.

† *Quas aut incuria fudit,*
Aut humana parum cavit natura. HOR.

which cannot fail to ſtrike the eye of every attentive obſerver. If the cauſe here maintained cannot be ſupported without minuteneſs of diſquiſition, it then deſerves to be regarded with a ſuſpicious eye. The enquirer may reſt aſſured, that the moſt correct or eloquent writer in the beſt of times, is not invulnerable to this ſpecies of attack. The ſuperiority of our own age, it is here meant to be aſſerted, ſtands forward to the obſervation of every unprejudiced reader. The preſent Eſſay pretends to no more than to compreſs the ſimple and undiſtorted evidence of a number of competent witneſſes in a ſhort compaſs; and the doctrine it is intended to ſupport, is, that this is all that is requiſite for a complete deciſion of the queſtion before us.

SECT. II.

Age of Queen Elizabeth.

WE have already referred to the teſtimony of Swift, who in his Letter to Lord Treaſurer Oxford, containing a Propoſal for correcting, improving and aſcertaining the Engliſh Tongue, ſtates the period in which our language "received moſt improvement, to commence with the beginning of queen Elizabeth's reign, and to conclude with the Great Rebellion in 1642."

To the authority of Swift we may add that of Johnſon. In the Preface to his Dictionary he delivers himſelf thus:

"So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have ſtudiouſly endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the reſtoration, whoſe works I regard as *the wells of Engliſh undefiled*, as the pure ſources of genuine diction. Our language, for almoſt a century, has, by the concurrence of many cauſes, been gradually departing from its original *Teutonick* character, and deviating towards a *Gallick* ſtructure and phraſeology, from which it ought to be our endeavour

to recal it, by making our ancient volumes the ground-work of ſtyle, admitting among the additions of later times, only ſuch as may ſupply real deficiencies, ſuch as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate eaſily with our native idioms.

" But as every language has a time of rudeneſs antecedent to perfection, as well as of falſe refinement and declenſion, I have been cautious leſt my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and crowd my book with words now no longer underſtood. I have fixed *Sidney's* work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excurſions. From the authors which roſe in the time of *Elizabeth*, a ſpeech might be formed adequate to all the purpoſes of uſe and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from *Hooker* and the tranſlation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from *Bacon;* the phraſes of policy, war and navigation from *Raleigh;* the dialect of poetry and fiction from *Spenſer* and *Sidney;* and the diction of common life from *Shakeſpeare*, few ideas would be loſt to mankind, for want of *Engliſh* words, in which they might be expreſſed."

It is to be obſerved, that the laſt clauſe of this paſſage falls off ſomething from the lofty aſſertion of thoſe that precede it. The queſtion is not merely

merely of words, but of arrangement. If the point of copiouſneſs could be conceded, the article of "elegance" would ſtill be at iſſue.

Some of the cauſes of the predilection of Swift and Johnſon for the age of queen Elizabeth are obvious. It is well known, in what terms of acrimony and perſonal hatred Swift attacked Dryden and ſome of the moſt eminent writers of Charles's reign. Johnſon's partiality for old Engliſh manners and practices was unbounded; nor can there be produced from the annals of our literature a more fervent anti-whig and anti-gallican. But, even if we could ſucceed in ſetting aſide theſe two illuſtrious men as incompetent witneſſes, we ſhould ſtill meet with a hoſt of critics adhering to a ſimilar opinion.

The practice however of Swift and Johnſon was better than their precepts. It may be affirmed particularly of the latter, that there is not perhaps a ſingle modern writer admired for his elegance of compoſition, who has leſs "made our ancient volumes the ground-work of his ſtyle," than this author.

It ſeems to be of no great moment whether our language be German or French in its ſtructure and phraſeology, provided it be uniform, ſimple, copious, impreſſive and energetical. The Norman conqueſt and other ſubſequent occurrences

rences are fundamental events in the hiſtory of our language, ſcarcely leſs than the Saxon eſtabliſhment itſelf.

Let us, according to the recommendation of Johnſon, take Sidney's work as the boundary of our enquiry. Sir Philip Sidney died a young man, in the year 1586, and his Arcadia made its firſt appearance from the preſs in 1590. The following may ſerve as a ſpecimen of the manner in which it is written.

" *Claius* was going on with his praiſes, but *Strephon* bad him ſtay, and looke: and ſo they both perceaved a thinge which floted drawing nearer and nearer to the banke; but rather by the fauourable working of the Sea, then by any ſelfe induſtrie. They doubted a while what it ſhould bee; till it was caſt up euen hard before them: at which time they fully ſaw that it was a man. Wherupon running for pitie ſake vnto him, they found his hands (as it ſhould appeare, conſtanter frendes to his life then his memorie) faſt griping upon the edge of a ſquare ſmall coffer, which lay all vnder his breaſt: els in himſelfe no ſhew of life, ſo as the boord ſeemed to be but a beere to carrie him a land to his Sepulchre. So drew they vp a young man of ſo goodly ſhape, and well pleaſing fauour, that one would thinke death had in him a louely countenance; and, that

that though he were naked, nakednes was to him an apparrell. That ſight increaſed their compaſſion, and their compaſſion called vp their care; ſo that lifting his feete aboue his head, making a great deale of ſalt water come out of his mouth, they layd him vpon ſome of their garments, and fell to rub and chafe him, till they brought him to recouer both breath the ſeruant, and warmth the companion of liuing. At length opening his eyes, he gaue a great groane, (a dolefull note but a pleaſaunt dittie) for by that they founde not onely life, but ſtrength of life in him."

This however is a favourable ſpecimen. What does the reader think of the elegiac ſtrains of Claius, which the incident here related ſo unfortunately interrupted?

"Alas my *Strephon* (ſaid he) what needes this ſkore to recken vp onely our loſſes? What doubt is there, but that the light of this place, doth cal our thoughtes to appeare at the court of affection, held by that racking ſteward, Remembrance?——No, no, let vs thinke with conſideration, and conſider with acknowledging, and acknowledge with admiration, and admire with loue, and loue with joy in the midſt of all woes: let vs in ſuch ſorte thinke, I ſay, that our poore eyes were ſo enriched as to behold, and our lowe hearts ſo exalted as to loue, a maide, who is ſuch, that

that as the greateſt thing the world can ſhewe, is her beautie, ſo the leaſt thing that may be prayſed in her, is her beautie. Certainely as her eye-lids are more pleaſant to behold, then two white kiddes climing vp a faire tree, and browſing on his tendreſt braunches, and yet are nothing, compared to the day-ſhining ſtarres contayned in them; and as her breath is more ſweete then a gentle South-weſt wind, which coms creeping ouer flowrie fieldes and ſhaddowed waters in the extreeme heate of ſummer, and yet is nothing, compared to the hony-flowing ſpeach that breath doth carrie: no more all that our eyes can ſee of her (though when they haue ſeene her, what elſe they ſhall euer ſee is but drie ſtuble after clouers graſſe) is to be matched with the flocke of vnſpeakable vertues laid vp delightfully in that beſt builded folde."

It would be an eaſier, though a leſs moral, taſk, to praiſe, than to read, four hundred and eighty ſix, cloſe-printed, folio pages of ſuch mawkiſh writing as this. It is ſingular that ſo gallant and diſtinguiſhed a perſonage as ſir Philip Sidney, ſhould have written a work of theſe dimenſions, ſo near to the being utterly void of all genuine paſſion and manly ſpirit. To read this performance, one would think that our anceſtors who admired it, had a blood that crept

more feebly in their veins than we have, and that they were as yet but half awaked from the ſtupidity of the ſavage ſtate, or, what has been called, the ſtate of nature.

Hooker was undoubtedly a writer of ſuperior merit. Whoever ſhall beſtow upon him a diligent peruſal, will find himſelf well rewarded by the venerable ſimplicity of his character, the profoundneſs of his thoughts, and the manlineſs of his eloquence. Thoſe perſons however have been, to ſay the leaſt, very indiſcreet friends to the fame of Hooker, who have held *him* up as a model of Engliſh ſtyle. But what will not clerical bigotry attempt? Hooker was the great champion of our epiſcopal church, as ſettled by queen Elizabeth, againſt thoſe who pretended to demonſtrate the neceſſity of a further reformation.

The following is the eulogium pronounced upon Hooker by Dr. Lowth in the Preface to his Short Introduction to Engliſh Grammar.

"The Engliſh language hath been much cultivated during the laſt two hundred years.—— But whatever other improvements it may have received, it hath made no advances in grammatical accuracy. *Hooker* is one of the earlieſt writers of conſiderable note within the period above-mentioned: let his writings be compared

with

with the beſt of thoſe of more modern date; and, I believe, it will be found, that in correctneſs, propriety, and purity of Engliſh ſtyle, he hath hardly been ſurpaſſed, or even equaled, by any of his ſucceſſors."

There ſeems to be a remarkable contrariety in this reſpect between the opinion of Dr. Lowth and that of the celebrated Hume. "Engliſh proſe," ſays the latter, in his Hiſtory of England, "during the reign of James [the firſt], was written with little regard to the rules of grammar." It is ſufficiently evident, from the train of his reaſoning in this place, that he did not mean to except from his cenſure the reign of Elizabeth.

I ſhall not preſume to decide the controverſy between the mitred biſhop and the accompliſhed infidel.

As an extract from Hooker, let us firſt conſider his character of Calvin, in the Preface to his Laws of Eccleſiaſtical Politie.

"Think not," ſays the author, addreſſing himſelf to the advocates for a further reformation, "that ye read the words of one, who bendeth himſelf as an adverſary againſt the truth, which ye have already imbraced, but the words of one who deſireth even to imbrace together with you the ſelf ſame truth, if it be the truth;

truth; and for that cauſe (for no other, God he knoweth) hath undertaken the burthenſome labour of this painful kind of conference. For the playner acceſs whereunto, let it be lawful for me to rip up the very bottom how and by whom your diſcipline was planted, at ſuchtime as this age we live in began to make firſt trial thereof.

"A Founder it had, whom, for mine own part, I think incomparably the wiſeſt man that ever the French Church did injoy, ſince the hour it injoyed him. His bringing up was in the ſtudie of the civil Law. Divine knowledge he gathered not by hearing or reading ſo much, as by teaching others. For though thouſands were debters to him, as touching knowledg in that kind; yet he to none but onely to God, the Author of that moſt bleſſed Fountain the book of Life, and of the admirable dexterity of wit, together with the helps of other learning which were his guides: till being occaſioned to leave *France*, he fell at the length upon *Geneva*."

We will next refer to a ſpecimen of our author's eloquence, manly indeed, but, as the manner was in the period in which he wrote, ſomewhat loitering and tedious.

"His [God's] commanding thoſe things to be which are, and to be in ſuch ſort as they are,

to keep that tenure and courſe which they do, importeth the eſtabliſhment of Natures Law. This worlds firſt Creation, and the preſervation ſince of things created, what is it, but onely ſo far forth a manifeſtation by execution, what the eternal Law of God is concerning things natural? And as it cometh to paſs in a Kingdom rightly-ordered, that after a Law is once publiſhed, it preſently takes effect far and wide, all States framing themſelves thereunto; even ſo let us think it fareth in the natural courſe of the world: Since the time that God did firſt proclaim the Edicts of his law upon it, Heaven and earth have hearkned unto his voice, and their labour hath been to do his will: *He made a law for the Rain,* He gave his *decree unto the Sea, that the Waters ſhould not paſs his commandment.* Now, if nature ſhould intermit her courſe, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the obſervation of her own Laws; thoſe principal and Mother Elements of the World, whereof all things in this lower world are made, ſhould loſe the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that Heavenly Arch erected over our heads ſhould looſen and diſſolve it ſelf; if Celeſtial Spheres ſhould forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themſelves any way as it might happen; if the Prince of the Lights

of

of Heaven, which now as a Gyant doth run his unwearied courſe, ſhould, as it were, through a languiſhing faintneſs, begin to ſtand, and to reſt himſelf; if the Moon ſhould wander from her beaten way, the times and ſeaſons of the yeere blende themſelves, by diſordered and confuſed mixture, the winds breathe out their laſt gaſp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away, as children at the withered breaſts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief; what would become of man himſelf, whom theſe things now do all ſerve? See we not plainly, that obedience of creatures unto the Law of Nature, is the ſtay of the whole world?" Eccl. Pol., Book I, c. 3. Edit. 1662.

I will add one more extract, recommended to notice by its being quoted by Locke in his Treatiſe on Government, and ſeemingly placed as a ſort of baſis upon which his political ſyſtem is erected. Locke, Of Government, Book II, Chap. II, §. 5.

"The like natural inducement hath brought men to know, that it is their duty no leſs to love others then themſelves. For ſeeing thoſe things which are equal, muſt needs all have one meaſure: if I cannot but wiſh to receive all good, even as much at every mans hand, as any man

can wiſh unto his ſoul, how ſhould I look to have any part of my deſire herein ſatisfied, unleſs my ſelf be careful to ſatisfie the like deſire, which is undoubtedly in other men, we all being of one and the ſame nature? To have any thing offered them repugnant to this deſire, muſt needs in all reſpects grieve them as much as me: So that if I do harm, I muſt look to ſuffer; there being no reaſon that others ſhould ſhew greater meaſure of love to me, then they have by me ſhewed unto them. My deſire therefore to be loved of my equals in nature as much as poſſible may be, impoſeth upon me a natural duty of bearing to them-ward fully the like affection." Book I, c. 8.

Who ſees not that the ſenſe of all this fine-ſpun, myſtical and fruitleſs complexity, might have been better and more clearly expreſſed in two lines?

I proceed now to the mention of Shakeſpear, a writer whom no ingenuous Engliſh reader can recollect without the profoundeſt eſteem and the moſt unbounded admiration. His gigantic mind enabled him in a great degree to overcome the fetters in which the Engliſh language was at that period bound. In him we but rarely trace the languid and tedious formality which at that time characteriſed Engliſh compoſition. His

ſoul

ſoul was too impetuous, and his ſympathy with human paſſions too entire, not to inſtruct him in the ſhorteſt road to the heart.

But Shakeſpear for the moſt part is great only, when great paſſions are to be expreſſed. In the calmer and leſs turbid ſcenes of life his genius ſeems in a great degree to forſake him. His wit is generally far fetched, trivial and cold. His tranquil ſtyle is perplexed, pedantical, and greatly disfigured with conceits. Of this we will exhibit ſome examples. They ſhall be taken from ſuch of his plays as are ſuppoſed to have been written in the reign of James the firſt. It would not have been leſs eaſy to have detected ſimilar faults in his earlier plays.

The following is part of the dialogue between the diſguiſed Duke and Iſabella in Meaſure for Meaſure, upon occaſion of Angelo's atrocious propoſition concerning the pardon of her brother.

" *Duk.* The hand that hath made you faire, hath made you good: the goodneſſe that is cheape in beauty, makes beauty brieſe in goodneſſe; but grace being the ſoule of your complexion, ſhall keepe the body of it ever faire: the aſſault that *Angelo* hath made to you, Fortune hath convaid to my underſtanding; and but that frailty hath examples for his falling, I

ſhould wonder at *Angelo:* how will you doe to content this Subſtitute, and to ſave your brother?——

" *Iſab.* Let me heare you ſpeake farther; I have ſpirit to doe any thing that appeares not foule in the truth of my ſpirit.

" *Duk.* Vertue is bold, and goodneſſe never fearfull: Have you not heard ſpeake of *Mariana* the ſiſter of *Fredericke* the great Souldier, who miſcarried at Sea?

" *Iſab.* I have heard of the Lady, and good words went with her name.

" *Duk.* She ſhould this *Angelo* have married: was affianced to her by oath, and the nuptial appointed: between which time of the contract, and limit of the ſolemnity, her brother *Fredericke* was wrackt at Sea, having in that periſhed veſſell, the dowry of his ſiſter: but marke how heavily this befell to the poore Gentlewoman, there ſhe loſt a noble and renouned brother, in his love toward her, ever moſt kind and naturall: with him the portion and ſinew of her fortune, her marriage dowry: with both, her combynate-huſband, this well ſeeming *Angelo.*

" *Iſab.* Can this be ſo? did *Angelo* ſo leave her?

" *Duk.* Left her in her teares, and dried not one of them with his comfort: ſwallowed his

vowes

vowes whole, pretending in her, diſcoveries of diſhonor: in few, beſtow'd her on her owne lamentation, which ſhe yet weares for his ſake: and he, a marble to her *eares, is waſhed with them, but relents not.——Goe you to *Angelo*, anſwer his requiring with a plauſible obedience, agree with his demands to the point:—— we ſhall adviſe this wronged maid to ſteed up your appointment, goe in your place: if the encounter acknowledge it ſelfe hereafter, it may compell him to her recompence; and heere, by this is your brother ſaved, your honor untainted, the poore *Mariana* advantaged, and the corrupt Deputy ſcaled." Edit. 1632, commonly called the ſecond folio.

Nothing can be of a ſtyle more quaint and uncouth, than the letters that are from time to time introduced in different plays of Shakeſpear. Take as a ſpecimen the letter of Poſthumus to Imogen in the tragedy of Cymbeline.

" Ivſtice, and your Fathers wrath (ſhould hee take mee in his Dominion) could not be ſo cruell to me, as you, (oh the deereſt of Creatures) would even renew me with your eyes. Take notice that I am in *Cambria* at *Milford-Haven:* what your owne Love, will out of this adviſe you, follow. So he wiſhes you all hap-

* Tears.

pineſſe, that remanies loyall to his Vow, and your encreaſing in Love.

" *Leonatus Poſthumus.*"

There was probably never a grander occaſion of eloquence, than when Brutus aſcended the roſtrum to vindicate the aſſaſſination of Cæſar. Nothing but the contagion of the vileſt taſte in literature, could have led Shakeſpear to put into his mouth ſuch phraſes as the following.

"Be patient till the laſt. Romans, Countreymen, and Lovers, heare mee for my cauſe, and be ſilent, that you may heare. Beleeve me for mine Honor, and have reſpect to mine Honor, that you may beleeve. Cenſure me in your Wiſedome, and awake your Senſes, that you may the better Iudge.————There is Teares, for his Love: Ioy, for his Fortune: Honor, for his Valour: and death for his Ambition."

I know not how far the great ſoul of Brutus, if he had condeſcended to ſuch poor prating as this, could have elevated it by his enunciation: dramatic writers, well acquainted with the ſtage, often err in this way, thinking rather, how feeble or fooliſh things may be diſguiſed by an admirable delivery, than what they are in themſelves. This I know, that the genuine tendency of ſuch expreſſions was to procure

Brutus to be driven out by the Roman people with hootings, execration and ſcorn.

We will only add to theſe examples, the words in which the Duke communicates to Othello his commiſſion for Cyprus. One would think that no function could require greater ſimplicity of language.

"The Turke with a moſt mighty preparation makes for Cyprus: *Othello*, the Fortitude of the place is beſt knowne to you. And though we have there a Subſtitute of moſt allowed ſufficiency; yet opinion, a more Soveraigne Miſtris of Effects, throwes a more ſafe voyce on you you muſt therefore be content to ſlubber the * groſſe of your new Fortunes, with this more ſtubborne, and boyſterous expedition."

We will now proceed to ſir Walter Raleigh, a writer more learned than Shakeſpear, more poliſhed by the varieties of human intercourſe, and that with perſons of the higheſt eminence and ſtation, than Hooker. He has accordingly obtained the eulogium of Hume, an author eminently ſuperior to the prejudices of Swift, Johnſon and Lowth. "Raleigh," ſays the hiſtorian, "is the beſt model of that ancient ſtyle which ſome writers would affect to revive at preſent." He undoubtedly exhibits a much eaſier flow of

* Gloſs.

language,

language, and a more juſt mode of expreſſion, than any of the authors hitherto adduced. But the reader ſhall judge for himſelf.

Sir Walter Raleigh, though a courtier of queen Elizabeth, and about the ſame age as ſir Philip Sidney, wrote in the reign of James the firſt, during a thirteen years impriſonment in the Tower of London, under ſentence for an imputed conſpiracy to dethrone that monarch. The publication of his Hiſtory of the World is dated 1617, the year previous to that in which he was beheaded.

It is thus that he concludes the Preface of that work.

"I know that as the charitable will iudge charitably: ſo againſt thoſe, *qui gloriantur in malitia*, my preſent aduerſity hath diſarmed me. I am on the ground already; and therefore haue not farre to fall: and for riſing againe, as in the Naturall priuation there is no receſſion to habit; ſo it is ſeldome ſeene in the priuation politique. I doe therefore for-beare to ſtile my Readers *Gentle, Courteous*, and *Friendly*, thereby to beg their good opinions.—For it is certaine, let vs claw the Reader with neuer ſo many courteous phraſes; yet ſhall wee euer-more be thought fooles, that write fooliſhly. For concluſion; all the hope I haue lies in this, That I haue already found

found more vngentle and vncourteous readers of my Loue towards them, and well-deſeruing of them, than euer I ſhall doe againe. For had it beene otherwiſe, I ſhould hardly haue had this leiſure, to haue made my ſelfe a foole in print."

From the body of the work we will extract a part of ſir Walter's reflections on the deaths of Hannibal and Scipio, in writing which it is evident that his own adverſity was ſtrongly preſent to his mind. Book V, Chap. VI, §. 2.

" Hence it comes, to wit, from the enuie of our equals, and jealouſie of our Maſters, be they Kings or Commonweales, That there is no Profeſſion more vnproſperous than that of Men of Warre, and great Captaines, being no Kings. For beſides the enuie and jealouſie of men; the ſpoyles, rapes, famine, ſlaughter of the innocent, vaſtation, and burnings, with a world of miſeries layed on the labouring man, are ſo hateſull to God, as with good reaſon did *Monluc* the Marſhall of *France* confeſſe, That *were not the mercies of* God *infinite, and without reſtriction, it were in vaine for thoſe of his profeſſion to hope for any portion of them: ſeeing the cruelties, by them permitted and commited, were alſo infinite.* Howſoeuer, this is true, That the victories, which are obtayned by many of the greateſt Commanders, are commonly either aſcribed to thoſe that ſerue vnder them, to For-

tune, or to the cowardiſe of the Nation againſt whom they ſerue. For the moſt of others, whoſe vertues haue rayſed them aboue the leuell of their inferiours, and haue ſurmounted their enuie: yet haue they been rewarded in the end, either with diſgrace, baniſhment, or death. Among the *Romans* we finde many examples hereof, as *Coriolanus*, *M. Liuius*, *L. Æmylius*, and this our *Scipio*, whom we haue lately buried. Among the *Greekes* we reade of not many, that eſcaped theſe rewards. Yea, long before theſe times, it was a Legacie that *Dauid* beqûeathed vnto his victorious Captaine *Joab*. With this fare *Alexander* feaſted *Parmenio*, *Philotas*, and others; and prepared it for *Antipater* and *Caſſander*. Hereto *Valentinian* the Emperour inuited *Ætius*: who, after many other victories, ouerthrew *Attila* of the *Hunnes*, in the greateſt battaile, for the well fighting and reſolution of both Armies, that euer was ſtrucken in the world; for there fell of thoſe that fought beſide runne-awaies, an hundred and foureſcore thouſand.—The ſame vnworthy deſtinie, or a farre worſe, had *Belliſarius*; whoſe vndertakings and victories were ſo difficult and glorious, as after-ages ſuſpected them for fabulous. For he had his eyes torne out of his head by *Iuſtinian*: and he died a blinde begger. *Narſes* alſo, to the great preiudice of *Chriſtian* Religion, was diſgrac'd by *Iuſtine*. That

Rule

Rule of *Cato* againſt *Scipio*, hath been well obſerued in euery age ſince then; to wit, That the Common-weale cannot be accounted free, which ſtandeth in awe of any one man. And hence hath the *Turkes* drawn another Principle, and in deed a *Turkiſh* one, That euery warlike Prince ſhould rather deſtroy his greateſt men of Warre, than ſuffer his owne glory to be obſcured by them. For this cauſe did *Baiaret* the ſecond diſpatch *Baſſa Aconat: Selim* ſtrangle *Baſſa Muſtapha;* and moſt of thoſe Princes bring to ruine the moſt of their *Viſiers*. Of the *Spaniſh* Nation, the great *Gonſaluo*, who draue the French out of *Naples:* and *Ferdinando Corteſe*, who conquered *Mexico* were crowned with nettles, not with Lawrell. The Earles of *Egmond* and *Horn*, had no heads left them to weare garlands on. And that the great Captaines of all Nations haue been payd with this copper Coine; there are examples more than too many."

Knolles, author of the General Hiſtory of the Turks, whoſe work was publiſhed in the year of James's acceſſion to the crown of England, muſt have a place in our catalogue, in conſideration of the pompous encomium pronounced upon him by Dr. Johnſon. Johnſon, in the hundred and twenty ſecond number of his Rambler, attempts to vindicate the literary honours of his country,

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as having poſſeſſed "hiſtorians, whom we may venture to place in compariſon with any that the neighbouring nations can produce." For this purpoſe he mentions Raleigh and Clarendon: and then proceeds as follows:

"But none of our writers can, in my opinion, juſtly conteſt the ſuperiority of *Knolles*, who in his hiſtory of the *Turks*, has diſplayed all the excellencies that narration can admit. His ſtile, though ſomewhat obſcured by time, and ſometimes vitiated by falſe wit, is pure, nervous, elevated, and clear.—There is nothing turgid in his dignity, nor ſuperfluous in his copiouſneſs.—

"Nothing could have ſunk this author in obſcurity, but the remoteneſs and barbarity of the people, whoſe ſtory he relates. It ſeldom happens, that all circumſtances concur to happineſs or fame. The nation, which produced this great hiſtorian, has the grief of ſeeing his genius employed upon a foreign and unintereſting ſubject; and that writer, who might have ſecured perpetuity to his name, by a hiſtory of his own country, has expoſed himſelf to the danger of oblivion, by recounting enterprizes and revolutions, of which none deſire to be informed."

Dr. Johnſon had ſome propenſity to paradoxes, particularly in matters of taſte; and he may be ſuſpected, more than once in his literary carreer,

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of having conceived the experiment, how far it was poſſible, by a grave and ſolemn air, to impoſe upon the world the moſt contemptible miſtakes*. He had alſo a paſſion for all that was genuine in Engliſh, before rebellion, independence and whiggiſm had poiſoned the national character: ſo that, in ſuch an inſtance as that before us, he was very poſſibly himſelf the dupe of his own legerdemain.

Knolles's ſtyle is ſo full of the groſſeſt ſoleciſms and barbariſm, and he is in this reſpect ſo much below any of the authors hitherto quoted, that I ſhall not condeſcend to explore his performance, but take the firſt example that offers; merely that ſuperficial readers may be put upon their guard, when they meet with the praiſes of an author, or a performance, that perhaps never was praiſed before, not to take every ſuch eulogium in genuine payment.

"This citie *Mahomet* thought to haue taken vnprouided; and ſo vpon the ſuddaine to haue carried it; but was therein much deceiued, finding it ſtrongly fortified and manned both by the Venetians and *Scanderbeg*. Where when he had ſpent there ſome time, and to his great loſſe

* The caſe of his parliamentary debates in the Gentleman's Magazine, and that of his fictitious campaign between the Ruſſians and Turks, are well known.

in

in vaine attempted the cittie, hee riſe vpon the ſuddaine: and retiring into EPIRVS, came and ſat downe againe before CROIA, of purpoſe by his ſuddaine comming to haue terrified the cittizens: and vainely perſuaded, that he had left *Scanderbeg* in DIRRACHIVM, for that in the aſſailing thereof he had diſcouered many of *Scanderbeg* his men, and thereby ſuppoſed him to haue been there alſo; the greateſt cauſe why he ſo ſuddenly riſe and came to CROIA. At his firſt comming he offered great rewards and large priuiledges vnto the cittizens, if they would forthwith yeeld vp their cittie; otherwiſe he threatened vnto them all the calamities of warre, vowing neuer to depart thence before he had it: whereunto he receiued no other anſwere out of the cittie than was ſent him by the mouth of the cannon, or brought him by many moſt braue ſallies. *Scanderbeg* in the meane while continually moleſting his campe, and euery night falling into one quarter or another thereof." p. 402.

It is ſufficiently evident from theſe extracts of the moſt conſiderable writers of the reign of queen Elizabeth, that our language at that time comparatively lay in a ſort of chaos, and that no juſt notions were yet formed of ſimplicity in diction, or preciſion of utterance; much leſs of the arrange-

arrangement of clauſes and conſtruction of a period. The beſt authors wander at random, with no better compaſs to ſteer by, than each man's private and particular hypotheſis and conception. Nay they are worſe than this; for nothing is more evident, than each man's uncertainty and inconſiſtency with himſelf. Johnſon complains of modern writers, as "deviating towards a *Gallick* ſtructure and phraſeology." But ſyſtem, which is a thing of modern date, is a better defence againſt corruption, than can be afforded by conjecture and darkneſs. And he muſt have obſerved the old writers very inattentively, who does not know how extremely licentious they are in departing from the natural and philoſophical order of their words.

Far be it from any friend of ſound knowledge, and eſpecially of philological ſcience, to diſcourage the ſtudy of the old writers. But, while thus employed, let us well underſtand ourſelves. Let us commend them for the treaſures they really contain, and not for thoſe of which they are deſtitute. Let us reſpect them for their talents; let us read them for the riſe and progreſs of our language, not as a ſtandard of what it ought to be.

SECT. III.

Milton and Clarendon.

THE age which, next after that of queen Elizabeth, has obtained the ſuffrage of the critics, is that of Charles the ſecond. This was a period adorned with the writings of Milton, Dryden, Butler and Otway; and, perhaps deſerves above all others to be ſtyled the golden age of Engliſh poetry. Fanciful obſervers found a certain reſemblance between it and the age of Auguſtus, the literary glory of which has ſometimes been repreſented as owing to this circumſtance, that its wits were bred up in their youth in the lap of republican freedom, and afterwards in their riper age received that poliſh which is to be derived from the ſplendour and refinement of a court. Juſt ſo, the ſcene amidſt which the wits of King Charles's days paſſed their boyiſh years, was that of civil war, of regicide, or of unreſtrained republican ſpeculation; which was ſucceeded by the manners of a gay and licentious court, grafting the ſhoots of French refinement, upon the more vigorous and luxuriant plant of Engliſh growth.

growth. It is indeed eaſy to trace in the adventurous ſallies of the authors of this period, the remnant and tincture of republican audacioufneſs. The principle however here intended to be eſtabliſhed is, that, if our poetry never appeared to greater advantage, our proſe at leaſt was as yet unformed and rude.

We will begin with Milton, the oldeſt of thoſe writers, by whom the reign of Charles the ſecond has been made illuſtrious. Milton was more than fifty years old at the period of the Reſtoration, and, though moſt of his poetry was written ſubſequently to that event, his proſe is almoſt entirely of an earlier date.

The ſtyle of Milton, unlike that of moſt of our older writers, has by a few modern critics been treated with particular harſhneſs. Among the foremoſt of theſe is Dr. Johnſon.

"Through all his greater works," ſays this author, "there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *Diction*, a mode and caſt of expreſſion which bears little reſemblance to that of any former writer, and which is ſo far removed from common uſe, that an unlearned reader, when he firſt opens his book, finds himſelf ſurpriſed by a new language.

"This novelty has been, by thoſe who can

find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words ſuitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, ſays Addiſon, *ſunk under him.* But the truth is, that, both in proſe and verſe, he had formed his ſtyle by a perverſe and pedantick principle. He was deſirous to uſe Engliſh words with a foreign idiom. This in all his proſe is diſcovered and condemned; for there judgment operates freely, neither ſoftened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but ſuch is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without reſiſtance, the reader feels himſelf in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticiſm ſinks in admiration.

"Milton's ſtyle was not modified by his ſubject: what is ſhown with greater extent in *Paradiſe Loſt*, may be found in *Comus*. One ſource of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuſcan poets: the diſpoſition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps ſometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at laſt, may be ſaid what Jonſon ſays of Spenſer, that *he wrote no language*, but formed what *Butler* calls a *Babyloniſh Dialect*, in itſelf harſh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius, and extenſive learning, the vehicle of ſo much inſtruction and ſo much pleaſure,

pleaſure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity *."

After reading the extracts that have been given from writers under queen Elizabeth, it will be ſuſpected that this cenſure of Milton's ſtyle is too ſtrong and diſproportionate. If Addiſon were ſomewhat miſled by his veneration for Milton, Johnſon has erred in the other extreme. The former will probably be found at leaſt as near to the truth as the latter.

The fact ſeems to be, that Milton was diſſatisfied with the ſhapeleſs chaos in which our language appeared in former writers, and ſet himſelf, with that ardour which always diſtinguiſhed him, to reform it. His ſucceſs indeed is not entitled to unlimited encomium. The gigantic ſtructure of his genius perhaps ſomewhat miſled him. He endeavoured to form a language of too lofty and uniform a port. The exuberance of his mind led him to pour out his thoughts with an impetuoſity, that often ſwept away with it the laws of ſimplicity and even the rules of grammatical propriety. His attempt however to give ſyſtem to the lawleſs dialect of our anceſtors, was the mark of a generous ſpirit, and entitles him to our applauſe.

If we compare the ſtyle of Milton to that of

* Lives of the Poets.

later writers, and particularly to that of our own days, undoubtedly nothing but a very corrupt taſte can commend it. But the caſe is altered, if we compare it with the writings of his predeceſſors. An impartial critic would perhaps find no language in any writer that went before Milton, of ſo much merit as that of Milton himſelf.

As a ſpecimen of Milton's ſtyle, it may be worth while to ſelect that paſſage from his Reaſon of Church-Government urged againſt Prelaty, publiſhed more than twenty years before the Paradiſe Loſt, in which he ſpeaks, in little leſs than a prophetic ſpirit, of what he purpoſed to execute, to give ſubſtance to his own talent, and for the ornament of his country.

"Although a Poet," ſays he, "ſoaring in the high Region of his Fancies, with his Garland and ſinging Robes about him, might, without Apology, ſpeak more of himſelf then I mean to do; yet for me ſitting here below in the cool Element of Proſe, a mortal thing among many Readers of no Empyreal Conceit, to venture and divulge unuſual things of my ſelf, I ſhall petition to the gentler ſort, it may not be envy to me. I muſt ſay therefore, that after I had from my firſt years, by the ceaſeleſs diligence and care of my Father, whom God recompence, been exercis'd to the Tongues, and ſome Sciences, as my Age would

would ſuffer, by ſundry Maſters and Teachers both at home and at the Schools, it was found, that whether ought was impos'd me by them that had the overlooking, or betak'n to of my own choiſe in Engliſh, or other Tongue, proſing or verſing, but chiefly this latter, the ſtile by certain vital Signs it had, was likely to live. But much latelier in the privat Academies of *Italy*, whither I was favour'd to reſort, perceiving that ſome Trifles which I had in memory, compos'd at under twenty or thereabout (for the manner is, that every one muſt give ſome proof of his wit and reading there) met with acceptance above what was lookt for, and other things which I had ſhifted in ſcarſity of Books and other Conveniences to patch up amongſt them, were receiv'd with written Encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to beſtow on men of this ſide the *Alps*, I began thus far to aſſent both to them and divers of my friends here at home; and not leſs to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent ſtudy, (which I take to be my portion in this Life) joyn'd with the ſtrong propenſity of Nature, I might perhaps leave ſomething ſo written to after-times, as they ſhould not willingly let it die.———

"The thing which I had to ſay, and thoſe Intentions which have liv'd within me ever ſince I

could conceive my ſelf any thing worth to my Country, I return to crave excuſe that urgent Reaſon hath pluckt from me, by an abortive and foredated diſcovery. And the accompliſhment of them lies not but in a power above mans to promiſe; but that none hath by more ſtudious ways endeavour'd, and with more unwearied Spirit that none ſhall, that I dare almoſt aver of my ſelf, as far as life and free leaſure will extend; and that the Land had once infranchis'd her ſelf from this impertinent yoke of Prelaty, under whoſe inquiſitorius and tyrannical, duncery, no free and ſplendid Wit can flouriſh. Neither do I think it ſhame to covenant with any knowing Reader, that for ſome few years yet I may go on truſt with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be rais'd from the heat of Youth, or the vapours of Wine; like that which flows at waſt from the Pen of ſome vulgar Amoriſt, or the trencher fury of a riming Paraſite; nor to be obtain'd by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren Daughters, but by devout Prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledg, and ſends out his Seraphim, with the hallow'd Fire of his Altar, to touch and purify the Lips of whom he pleaſes: to this muſt be added induſtrious and ſelect Reading, ſteddy Obſervation,

tion, inſight into all ſeemly and generous Arts and Affairs; till which in ſome meaſure be compaſt, at mine one peril and coſt, I refuſe not to ſuſtain this expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard ſo much credulity upon the beſt Pledges that I can give them. Although it nothing content me to have diſclos'd thus much before hand, but that I truſt hereby to make it manifeſt with what ſmall willingneſs I endure to interrupt the purſuit of no leſs hopes then theſe, and leave a calm and pleaſing Solitarines, fed with cherful and confident thoughts, to imbark in a troubl'd Sea of noiſes and hoars Diſputes."

The Areopagitica of Milton, or a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicenced Printing, notwithſtanding the occaſional ſtiffneſs and perplexity of its ſtyle, is one of the moſt eloquent proſe compoſitions in this or any other language. To give the reader an adequate idea of its beauties, it would be neceſſary to inſert one third of the performance. Let us content ourſelves with the following admirable deſcription of the perſon over whom the licenſer will occaſionally be called to exerciſe his juriſdiction.

" If therfore ye be loth to diſhearten utterly and diſcontent, not the mercenary crew of falſe pretenders to learning, but the free and ingenious ſort of ſuch as evidently were born to ſtudy

and

and love Learning for it ſelf, not for lucre, or any other end, but the ſervice of God and of Truth, and perhaps that laſting fame and perpetuity of praiſe which God and good men have conſented ſhall be the reward of thoſe whoſe publiſht Labours advance the good of mankind, then know, that ſo far to diſtruſt the judgment and the honeſty of one who hath but a common repute in Learning, and never yet offended, as not to count him fit to print his mind without a tutor and examiner, leſt he ſhould drop a ſciſm, or ſomthing of corruption, is the greateſt diſpleaſure and indignity to a free and knowing ſpirit that can be put upon him. What advantage is it to be a Man over it is to be a Boy at School, if we have only ſcapt the Ferular, to come under the ſeſcu of an *Imprimatur?* if ſerious and elaborat Writnings, as if they were no more then the theam of a Grammar-lad under his Pedagogue, muſt not be utter'd without the curſory eyes of a temporizing and extemporizing licenſer? He who is not truſted with his own actions, his drift not being known to be evil, and ſtanding to the hazard of Law and Penalty, has no great argument to think himſelf reputed in the Commonwealth wherin he was born, for other then a fool or a foreiner. When a man writes to the world, he ſummons up all his reaſon and deliberation

to aſſiſt him; he ſearches, meditats, is induſtrious, and likely conſults and confers with his judicious friends; after all which don he takes himſelf to be inform'd in what he writes, as well as any that writ before him; if in this the moſt conſummat act of his fidelity and ripeneſs, no years, no induſtry, no former proof of his abilities can bring him to that ſtate of maturity, as not to be ſtill miſtruſted and ſuſpected, unleſs he carry all his conſiderat diligence, all his midnight watchings, and expence of *Palladian* oyl, to the haſty view of an unleaſur'd licenſer, perhaps much his younger, perhaps far his inferiour in judgment, perhaps one who never knew the labour of Book-writing, and if he be not repulſt, or ſlighted, muſt appear in print like a Puny with his Guardian, and his Cenſors hand on the back of his title to be his bayl and ſurety, that he is no Idiot, or Seducer, it cannot but be a diſhonour and derogation to the Author, to the Book, to the privilege and dignity of Learning."

From theſe ſpecimens every impartial reader, will pronounce, that Milton wrote a ſtyle ſuperior to that of the moſt celebrated authors that went before him.

It is however ſingular, and deſerves to be noticed, as a proof of the ſtate of the Engliſh language,

guage, that, with all his profound and indefatigable ſcholarſhip, and his evident ſolicitude upon the queſtion of ſtyle, Milton is often glaringly ungrammatical, and his periods broken off abrupt and unfiniſhed. Inſtances of this laſt frequently occur in his Paradiſe Loſt. One that ought to be ſingled out, is in perhaps the fineſt paſſage of the whole poem; Satan's ſpeech to his companion in the opening of the work, before he has yet raiſed himſelf from off the burning lake. The ſpeech begins with a hypothetical clauſe, "If thou beeſt he;" but the hypotheſis is finally left without a conſequence. The ſentence is ſuſpended through the whole ſpeech, interſperſed with parentheſis upon parentheſis, and left imperfect at laſt. So poſſible is it to convey the nobleſt ſentiments, and the fineſt flights of poetry, amidſt the moſt flagrant violation of the rules of grammar.

No author has ever received louder or more frequent applauſes than lord Clarendon, author of that moſt valuable repoſitory of incidents and events, the Hiſtory of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England under king Charles the firſt. He was long held up as the perfect model of an hiſtorian. "I have met," ſays Dr. Felton, in his Diſſertation on the Claſſics, a work formerly of high reputation, "with none that may compare

pare with him in the Weight and Solemnity of his Style, in the Strength and Clearneſs of Diction, in the Beauty and Majeſty of Expreſſion, and that noble Negligence of Phraſe, which maketh his Words wait every where upon his Subject, with a Readineſs and Propriety, that Art and Study are almoſt Strangers to."

A ſhort ſpecimen may convince any ſober and intelligent reader, that Clarendon is every thing that is oppoſite to Dr. Felton's eulogium, unleſs indeed we ſhould except his "noble Negligence of Phraſe." Take for example the character he has annexed to the death of lord Strafford.

"Thus Fell the greateſt Subject in power, and little inferior to any in Fortune, that was at that time in any of the three Kingdoms; Who could well remember the time, when he led thoſe People, who then purſued him to his Grave. He was a man of great Parts, and extraordinary Endowments of Nature; not unadorn'd with ſome addition of Art and Learning, though that again was more improved and illuſtrated by the other; for he had a readineſs of Conception, and ſharpneſs of Expreſſion, which made his Learning thought more than in truth it was. His firſt inclinations and addreſſes to the

the Court, were only to eſtabliſh his Greatneſs in the Country; where he apprehended ſome acts of Power from the Lord *Savile*, who had been his Rival always there, and of late had ſtrengthen'd himſelf by being made a Privy-Counſellor, and Officer at Court: but his firſt attempts were ſo proſperous, that he contented not himſelf with being ſecure from that Lord's Power in the Country, but reſted not, till he had bereav'd his adverſary of all power and place in Court; and ſo ſent him down, a moſt Abject, Diſconſolate old man, to his Country, where he was to have the Superintendency over him too, by getting himſelf at that time made Lord Preſident of the North. Theſe Succeſſes, applied to a nature too Elate and Haughty of it ſelf, and a quicker progreſs into the greateſt Employments and Truſt, made him more tranſported with Diſdain of other men, and more Contemning the Forms of buſineſs, than haply he would have been, if he had met with ſome Interruptions in the beginning, and had paſs'd in a more leiſurely gradation to the Office of a States-man.

"He was, no doubt, of great obſervation, and a piercing judgment, both in Things and Perſons; but his too good ſkill in Perſons, made him judge the worſe of Things: for it was his Misfortune,

Misfortune, to be in a time wherein very few wiſe men were equally employ'd with him; and ſcarce any (but the Lord *Coventry*, whoſe Truſt was more confined) whoſe Faculties and Abilities were equal to his: So that upon the matter he rely'd wholly upon himſelf; and diſcerning many Defects in moſt men, he too much neglected what they ſaid or did. Of all his Paſſions, his Pride was moſt predominant: which a moderate exerciſe of ill Fortune might have corrected and reform'd; and which was by the hand of Heaven ſtrangely Puniſh'd, by bringing his Deſtruction upon him by Two things that he moſt deſpiſed, the People and Sr. *Harry Vane*. In a word, the Epitaph which *Plutarch* records that *Sylla* wrote for himſelf, may not be unfitly applied to him, "That no man did ever exceed "him, either in doing good to his Friends, or in "doing Miſchief to his Enemies; for his acts "of both kinds were moſt notorious."

Nothing can be more diſguſtful to a diſcerning obſerver of ſtyles, than the prolixity and perplexity of Clarendon's compoſition. Yet he will probably be found to have written well for his time. The abſurdity is in thoſe perſons who would hold up ſuch writing as a model to after times; as if one ſhould ſhow a ſchool-boy's theme, and maintain that a man of the moſt approved talents,

lents, and the ripeſt years, could not ſurpaſs it. The Engliſh language, as well as the Engliſh annals, is indebted to the labours of Clarendon.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Age of Charles the Second.

WE now come, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to the age of king Charles the ſecond. Milton and Clarendon, though for their celebrity and merits they could not be omitted, ſeem rather to belong to an intermediate period.

Whoever will impartially compare the proſe writers of king Charles's reign with any of their predeceſſors, will be ſtruck with the clear and rapid improvement. For this they were certainly indebted to the exile of the royal family. Many of them reſided during this period on the continent: they found the French much ſuperior to us in facility and grace of compoſition; and, had it been otherwiſe, compariſon, the long and cloſe compariſon to which they were incited, of one language with another, will always be found among the moſt fruitful ſources of improvement.

It is now firſt that we are preſented with the facility and graces of compoſition. The cele-

brated authors of this period write like men who lived in the world. Their ſtyle has much of the charm that characteriſes poliſhed converſation. They lay aſide the ſtiff and pedantic airs of their anceſtors, and condeſcend to expreſs themſelves with perſpicuity and a conſiderable portion of ſimplicity. This is a clear advance that they effected.

It is however a ſtage of improvement, and by no means the perfection of ſtyle. The force of which the Engliſh language was capable, was wholly unknown; and, if it were at that time in any inſtance exhibited, the cauſe that produced it was occaſional ſtrength of feeling, or vigour of genius, in the writer; it was not the reſult of analyſis, ſcience and ſyſtem. The writers of king Charles's reign are perſpicuous, but their ſtyle is feeble and relaxed. They caught the exterior and ſurface of the French character; and affected to compoſe, as the phraſe was, "like gentlemen, who wrote at their eaſe." The conſequence was artificial graces, elaborate negligence, feebleneſs in the choice of words, and idleneſs and inattention in their arrangement. They truſted all to the native powers of genius; and had but a very ſlight conception, that a finiſhed ſtyle is only to be obtained by aſſiduous and unwearied cultivation.

The

The writers moſt celebrated for the graces of compoſition in the reign of king Charles the ſecond, were ſir William Temple and archbiſhop Tillotſon; nor have any authors in the annals of literature experienced a more copious commendation. Novelty is one of the powers that has greateſt influence over the imagination; and Engliſhmen then ſaw, with aſtoniſhment and delight, a degree of beauty and appropriate art communicated to the ſtructure of their language.

Sir William Temple is undoubtedly an agreeable writer. His thoughts frequently carry the ſtamp of reflection and good ſenſe; and their impreſſion is by no means counteracted, in the degree in which we find it in the preceding periods of our literature, by the alloy of a perplexed or unnatural phraſeology †.

Take

† It is with infinite diffidence, not to ſay reluctance, that I am prevailed upon to annex marks of aſteriſks to a few of the phraſes I conceive to be moſt glaringly offenſive in the writers from this period. It is to a certain degree ſubverſive of my deſign, which was to leave the whole caſe to the unprejudiced verdict of the reader.

We muſt however confeſs that it is the duty of an author to render himſelf intelligible to as many different claſſes of readers as poſſible. The perſon who is already maſter of the ſubject, it is hoped, will forgive this neceſſary accommodation to readers of another deſcription.

Take the following paſſage from his Eſſay on Popular Diſcontents as a ſpecimen.

" Princes or States cannot * run into every Corner of their Dominions, to * look out Perſons fit for their Service, or that of the Public: They cannot ſee far with their own Eyes, nor hear with their own Ears; and muſt for the moſt part * do both with thoſe of other Men, or * elſe chuſe among ſuch ſmaller Numbers as are moſt * in their way; and theſe are ſuch, generally, as make their Court, or * give their Attendance, in order to advance themſelves to Honours, to Fortunes, to Places and Employments; and are uſually the leaſt worthy of them, and better * Servants to themſelves than the Government. The Needy, the Ambitious, the Half-witted, the Proud, the Covetous, are ever reſtleſs to get into publick Employments, * and many others that are uneaſy or * ill entertained at home. The Forward, the Buſie, the Bold, the Sufficient, purſue their * Game with more Paſſion, Endeavour,

Every one will be aware that aſteriſks are very incompetent to mark perplexity of ſtyle, complexity of conſtruction, and a thouſand other faults. To render this perceptible to the reader who cannot ſee it by its own light, aſſiſted by the actual degree of taſte in the country, would have required that endleſſneſs of diſſertation I was moſt ſolicitous to avoid. Every author, excepting perhaps the writer of primmers, preſumes in his readers ſome degree of previous information.

Application, and * thereby often ſucceed where better Men would fail. In the Courſe of my Obſervation I have found no Talent of ſo much Advantage among Men, towards their growing great or rich, as a violent and reſtleſs Paſſion and Purſuit * for one or t' other: And whoever * ſets his Heart and his Thoughts wholly upon ſome one Thing, muſt have very little * Wit, or very little * Luck, to fail. Yet all theſe * cover their * Ends with moſt worthy Pretences, and * thoſe Noble Sayings, *That Men are not born for themſelves, and muſt ſacrifice their Lives for the Publick, as well as their Time and their Health:* And thoſe who think * nothing leſs are ſo * uſed to ſay * ſuch fine Things, that * ſuch * who truly believe them are almoſt aſhamed to own it. In the mean time, the Noble, the Wiſe, the Rich, the Modeſt, thoſe that are eaſie in their Conditions or their Minds, thoſe who know moſt of the World and themſelves, are not only careleſs*, but often averſe from entering into Publick Charges or Employments, unleſs * upon the Neceſſities of their Country, Commands of their Prince, or * Inſtances of their Friends. What is to be done in this Caſe, when ſuch as offer themſelves, and * purſue, are not worth having, and ſuch as are moſt worthy, will neither offer, nor perhaps accept?"

Archbiſhop Tillotſon is certainly a writer of ſome merit. There are few authors who convey more ſound ſenſe in more perſpicuous expreſſion. It is no mean art of compoſition, where every ſentence comes to us with the force of a proverb, and preſents us with "what oft was thought †," but never before ſet down in ſo manly a ſtyle. Tillotſon however appears to have fallen into diſrepute. The age of Charles the ſecond is regarded by modern critics with neglect and ſcorn; though perhaps no age, except that of George the third, was ever ſo auſpicious to the improvement of Engliſh proſe; as none certainly has been adorned with loftier flights of poetry.

The following paſſage occurs in Tillotſon's Sermon on Sincerity, the laſt of his clerical compoſitions.

"Amongſt too many other inſtances of the great corruption and degeneracy of the Age * wherein we live, the great and general want of ſincerity in Converſation is * none of the leaſt. The World is * grown ſo full of Diſſimulation and Complement, that Mens words are * hardly any * ſignification of their thoughts; and if any Man * meaſure his words by his heart, and ſpeak as he thinks, and do not expreſs more kindneſs to every man, than men uſually have for any man,

† Pope.

he

he can * hardly eſcape the * cenſure of rudeneſs and want of breeding. The old *Engliſh* plainneſs and ſincerity †, that generous integrity of Nature and honeſty of Diſpoſition, which always * argues true greatneſs of mind, and * is uſually accompanied with undaunted courage and reſolution, * is in a great meaſure loſt amongſt us; there hath been a * long endeavour to transform us * into foreign Manners and Faſhions, and to bring us to a ſervile imitation of * none of the beſt of our Neighbours, in ſome of the worſt of their Qualities. The Dialect of Converſation is * now a days ſo ſwell'd with Vanity and Complement, and ſo * ſurfeited (as I may ſay) of expreſſions of kindneſs and reſpect, that if a man that lived an Age or two ago ſhould return into the World again, he would really want a Dictionary to * help him to underſtand his own Language, and to know the true intrinſick value of the phraſe in faſhion, and would * hardly at firſt believe at * what a low rate the higheſt * ſtrains and expreſſions of kindneſs imaginable * do commonly paſs * in current payment; and when he ſhould come to underſtand it, it would be a * great while before he

† Sincerity is a virtue that can ſcarcely be too much applauded; but the archbiſhop was probably miſtaken, when he referred us to the old Engliſh manners for an example of ingenuous and dignified ſincerity.

could bring himſelf, with a good Countenance and a good Conſcience to converſe with * Men upon equal terms and in their own way *.

" And in truth it is * hard to ſay whether it ſhould more provoke our contempt or our pity, to hear * what ſolemn expreſſions of reſpect and kindneſs will paſs between men, almoſt upon * no occaſion; how great honour and eſteem they will declare for one whom perhaps they never heard of or ſaw before, and how entirely they are * all on the ſudden devoted to his ſervice and intereſt for no reaſon; how infinitely and eternally obliged to him for no benefit, and how extremely they will be concerned for him, yea, and afflicted too for no cauſe. I know it is ſaid in Juſtification of this hollow kind of Converſation, that there is no harm, no real deceit in Complement, but the * matter is well enough, ſo long as we underſtand one another, *Et verba valent ut Nummi, Words are like Money*, * and when the current value of them is generally underſtood, no Man is cheated by them. This is * ſomething, if ſuch words were any thing; but being * brought into the Account, they are mere Cyphers. However it is ſtill a juſt * matter of complaint, that ſincerity and plainneſs are out of faſhion, and that our Language is running into a Lye; that Men have * almoſt quite pervert-

verted the uſe of ſpeech, and made words to ſignifie nothing; * but the greateſt part of the Converſation of Mankind, and of their intercourſe with one another, is little elſe but * driving a Trade of Diſſimulation; * inſomuch that it would make a Man * heartily ſick and weary of the World, to ſee the little ſincerity that is * in uſe, and practice among Men, and * tempt him to break out into that Melancholy Complaint and Wiſh of the Prophet, Jer. 9. *O that I had in the Wilderneſs a lodging-place, &c.*"

I will add one other paſſage from the ſame ſermon, which, on account of its ſtriking reſemblance, in tedioufneſs and circumlocution, to a paſſage before quoted from Hooker, may ſerve as a beacon to ſhow, how ſkilful writers are liable to be miſled from the path of improvement, by a deferential imitation of their celebrated predeceſſors.

"Truth and Reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the ſhew of any thing be good * for any thing, * I am ſure Sincerity is better; for why does any man diſſemble, or ſeem to be that which he is not, but becauſe he thinks it * good to have * ſuch a quality as he pretends to? * for to counterfeit and diſſemble, is to put on the appearance of ſome real excellency. Now the beſt way * in the world

world for a Man to * ſeem to be any thing, is really to be what he would ſeem to be. Beſides, that it is * many times as troubleſome, to * make good the pretences of a good quality, * as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is * ten to one, but he is diſcovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to ſeem to have it * is loſt."

Sprat is perhaps the firſt author who wrote Engliſh proſe with a ſtyle of neatneſs. Dr. Johnſon is profuſe in his commendation. "The Life of Cowley," he obſerves, "notwithſtanding the penury of Engliſh biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whoſe pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deſervedly ſet him high in the ranks of literature†." Again, ſpeaking of his Hiſtory of the Royal Society, he ſays, "This is one of the few books which ſelection of ſentiment and elegance of diction have been able to preſerve, though written upon a ſubject flux and tranſitory. The Hiſtory of the Royal Society is now read, not with the wiſh to know what they were then doing, but how their tranſactions are exhibited by Sprat†."

This exuberance of praiſe may ſeem ſomewhat to incroach upon Dr. Johnſon's favourite poſition, reſpecting the "*wells of Engliſh unde-*

† Lives of the Poets.

filed ‡." He would have been ſurpriſed, if he had been told, that his almoſt ſole reaſon for applauding Sprat, was his poſſeſſion of a quality, to which his predeceſſors ſeem to advance no pretenſions: though Sprat deſerves to be regarded as one of the moſt eminent refiners of the Engliſh tongue, yet few great authors have exhibited leſs richneſs of fancy, and perhaps not one has leſs energy and ardour of diction. But Johnſon was not a man in whom prejudice had deſtroyed all virtuous ingenuouſneſs of character; and truth would ſometimes force itſelf from his lips in defiance of an hypotheſis.

Our extracts ſhall be taken from his Life of Cowley, as being the moſt intereſting, and not leſs finiſhed than any other of his performances.

"Of his [Cowley's] Works that are Publiſh'd, it is * hard to give one general Character, * becauſe of the Difference of their Subjects; and the various Form and diſtant Times of their Writing. Yet this is true of them all, that in all the ſeveral * Shapes of his Style, there is ſtill very much of the Likeneſs and Impreſſion of the ſame Mind; the ſame unaffected Modeſty, and natural Freedom, and caſie Vigour, and chearful Paſſions, and innocent Mirth, which appeared

‡ See page 377.

in

in * all his Manners. We have many things that he * writ in two very * unlike * Conditions, in the Univerſity and the Court. But in his Poetry, as well as his Life, he mingled with * excellent Skill what was good in both States. In his Life he join'd the Innocence and Sincerity of the Scholar, with the Humanity and good Behaviour of the Courtier. In his Poems he united the Solidity and Art of the one, with the * Gentility and Graceſulneſs of the other."

Though Sprat was the firſt importer of neatneſs into his native tongue, yet he has a ſingular air of feebleneſs. His compoſition reminds the reader, of the appearance of an old man he may have ſeen, who, though dreſſed with care and ſpruceneſs, yet has ſomething ſtrangely old faſhioned in his air, and imbecil in his motions.

The morality of the following paſſage is of the nobleſt kind, but it certainly is not conceived with energy, nor couched in very forcible expreſſions.

" If any thing * ought to have changed his [Cowley's] Temper and Diſpoſition; it was his earneſt Affection for Obſcurity and Retirement. This, Sir, give me leave to condemn, even to you [Mr. Martin Clifford, to whom the Life of Cowley is addreſſed], who I know agreed with

him

him in the ſame * Humour. I acknowledge he choſe that State of Life, not * out of any Poetical Rapture, but * upon a ſteady and ſober Experience of Human Things. But, * however, I cannot applaud it in him. It is certainly a great Diſparagement to Virtue, and Learning itſelf, that thoſe very Things which * only make Men uſeful in the World, ſhould encline them to leave it. This ought never to be * allow'd to Good Men, unleſs the Bad had the ſame Moderation, and were willing to follow them into the Wilderneſs. But if the one ſhall contend to * get out of Employment, while the other ſtrive to * get into it, the Affairs of Mankind are * like to be in ſo * ill a * Poſture, that even the good Men themſelves will * hardly be able to enjoy their very Retreats in Security."

To theſe extracts, from authors whoſe attention was particularly devoted to the cultivation of ſtyle, let us add a ſpecimen of the manner in which our language was at that time written, from Locke on the Human Underſtanding. This treatiſe was publiſhed nearly at the period of king William's acceſſion. It has by no means remained without its praiſe, for the appropriateneſs and elegance of its compoſition. Locke was a man of an uncommonly clear and maſculine underſtanding, and greatly ſuperior to many of his

moſt

moſt diſtinguiſhed contemporaries, who, inſtead of being contented to trace facts and phenomena as he has done, idly bewildered themſelves in the invention of fanciful theories. His work forms too memorable an epoch in the annals of literature, not to render it improper that it ſhould be omitted even in this ſlight eſſay towards a hiſtory of the Engliſh language.

It is thus that he expreſſes himſelf, in Book I, Chap. I, §. 5.

"Though the *Comprehenſion* of our Underſtandings, comes * exceeding ſhort of the vaſt Extent of * things; yet we ſhall have Cauſe * enough to * magnify the bountiful Author of our Being, for that Portion and Degree of Knowledge, he has beſtowed on us, * ſo far above all the reſt of the Inhabitants of * this our Manſion. Men have Reaſon to be * well ſatisfied with what God hath * thought fit to give them, ſince he has given them (as St. *Peter* ſays,) πανλα προς ζωην και ευσεβειαν, Whatſoever is neceſſary for the Convenience of Life, and Information of Vertue; and has * put within the reach of their Diſcovery the Comfortable Proviſion for this Life and the Way that leads to a * better. How ſhort * ſoever their Knowledge may * come of an univerſal or perfect Comprehenſion of * whatſoever is, it yet ſecures their great * Concernments

cernments that they have Light enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their Maker, and the * ſight of their own Duties. Men may find * Matter ſufficient to * buſy their Heads, and employ their Hands with * Variety, Delight, and Satisfaction; if they will not * boldly quarrel with their * own Conſtitution, and throw away the Bleſſings their Hands are * fill'd with, becauſe they are not * big enough to graſp every thing. We ſhall not have much Reaſon to complain of the * narrowneſs of our Minds, if we will but employ them about * what may be of uſe to us; for of * that they are very capable: And it will be an Unpardonable, as well as Childiſh Peeviſhneſs, if we undervalue the Advantages of our * Knowledge, and neglect to improve it to the * Ends for which it was given us, becauſe there are ſome Things that are * ſet out of the reach of it. It will be no Excuſe to an Idle and Untoward Servant, who * would not attend his Buſineſs by Candle-light, to plead that he had not * broad Sun-ſhine. The Candle, that is * ſet up in us, ſhines bright enough for all our Purpoſes. The Diſcoveries we can make * with this, ought to ſatisfy us: And we ſhall then uſe our Underſtandings * right, when we * entertain all Objects in that Way and Proportion, * that they

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are ſuited to our Faculties; and * upon thoſe * Grounds, they are capable of being propos'd to us; and not peremptorily, or intemperately require Demonſtration, and demand Certainty, where Probability only is to be * had, * and which is ſufficient to govern all our * Concernments. If we will diſ-believe every thing, becauſe we cannot certainly know all things; we ſhall do * much-what as wiſely as he, who would not uſe his Legs, but * ſit ſtill and Periſh, becauſe he had no Wings to Fly."

Locke probably had not emphatically turned his attention to the ſubject of ſtyle. But the queſtion for the reader to conſider is, whether any man of Locke's talents, and living, as he did, in the moſt refined ſociety of his age and country, could at this time write a ſtyle ſo defective as his?

This celebrated author was applied to by the government of that period, as Milton had been in a ſimilar inſtance, to write a defence of the principles on which king William was called to the throne. The conſequence of this requeſt, was the publication of his Two Treatiſes of Government, a work highly applauded at that time, and which maintains its reputation, by right of poſſeſſion probably, to this day.

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The firſt of theſe Treatiſes is confined to the refutation of ſir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha. The following paſſage may ſerve as a ſpecimen.

" Suppoſing we ſhould grant, that a Man is *by Nature Governor* of his Children, *Adam* could not * hereby *be a Monarch* * *as ſoon as created:* For this Right of Nature being founded in his being their Father, * how *Adam* could have a *Natural Right* to be *Governor* before he was a Father, when by being a Father only he * had that *Right*, is, * methinks * hard to conceive, unleſs * he would have him to be a Father before he was a Father, and to have a Title before he had it.

" To this * foreſeen Objection, our A. anſwers very logically, *He was Governor in Habit and not in Act:* A very * pretty Way of being a Governor without Government, a Father without Children, and a King without Subjects.—Tho' even * this of *Act* and *Habit*, if it * ſignified any thing but our A's Skill in Diſtinctions, * be not to his Purpoſe in this Place. For the Queſtion is not here about *Adam's* actual Exerciſe of Government, but actually having a Title to be Governor: Government, ſays our A. *was due to* Adam *by the Right of Nature:* What is this Right of Nature? A Right Fathers * have over their Children by begetting them; *Generatione jus*

acquiritur parentibus in liberos, ſays our A. out of *Grotius*. The Right then follows the Begetting, as ariſing from it; ſo that according to this Way of Reaſoning or diſtinguiſhing of our A. *Adam*, as ſoon as he was created, had a Title *only in Habit, and not in Act*, which in * plain *Engliſh* is, He had actually no Title * at all." Book I, Chap. III, §. 18, 19.

A great proportion of the work is in a ſimilar ſtyle of compoſition. What ſhould we think of an adminiſtration now, who ſhould bring out ſuch a book, with a view to reconcile the nation at large to their meaſures? Does not this ſtrongly preſume a depraved taſte in all orders of men?

SECT.

SECT. V.

Age of Queen Anne.

WE come now to the age of queen Anne. This is the period of Engliſh proſe, which has always been attended with the higheſt and moſt extenſive plaudits. A few ſcholars indeed have affected to praiſe the age of queen Elizabeth; but the multitude of readers, for a long time, perhaps to this day, have pitched their tents, and taken up their reſt, under the banners of Anne.

Many reaſons may be aſſigned for this. Engliſh proſe, as I have endeavoured to ſhow, had gone on in a continual courſe of improvement. The writers of queen Anne's days refined upon the writers of king Charles's, though by no means ſo much as theſe had refined upon their predeceſſors. Many circumſtances tended to render the ſhort reign of Anne illuſtrious: the campaigns of Marlborough; the temporary conqueſt of a kingdom [Spain] which once ſeemed to threaten Europe with univerſal monarchy; the new ſpectacle of England at the head of a ſucceſsful continental confederacy. Add to this,

that the literary characters of that age were called to fill active ſituations. Not to mention inferior inſtances, we may recollect the negociations of Prior; the uncommonly important ſituation Swift held with the Tory adminiſtration; and the literary ambition of Bolingbroke, not inferior to the political. The domeſtic queſtion, which was then ſecretly at iſſue, whether the houſe of Hanover ſhould ſucceed, or the houſe of Stuart be reſtored, animated all hearts, and kept alive all underſtandings.

To the ſettlement of the queſtion of the ſucceſſion, ſucceeded a national torpor. It is now generally confeſſed, that the houſe of Hanover ſucceeded contrary to the predilection of a majority of the people. Literary men were not then aware of the uſeleſſneſs, not to ſay incumbrance, of patronage; and patronage could not even in appearance be kept up, under a royal family, by whom our language could neither be ſpoken nor read. Sir Robert Walpole rendered the caſe ſtill worſe, by the ſordidneſs of his maxims, the phlegmatiſm of his conduct, and the general propenſity he inſpired to commerce and gain. The ſpirit of the nation was ſunk; dulneſs reigned triumphant; and England bid fair to rival, in all that was baſe and deſpicable, the republic of Holland.

During

During this period, the popularity, which the writers under queen Anne had obtained among their contemporaries, had time to ſink deep in the hearts of men. Thoſe in whom the love of letters ſtill ſurvived, affirmed, and not without ſome plauſibilities to ſupport them, that the reign of illumination and taſte in Great Britain was haſtening to a cloſe; and they looked back with affection to Addiſon, Swift, and their contemporaries, as its laſt ſupporters. This appeared to their imagination an Auguſtan age, about to be ſucceeded by a long winter of arbitrary ſway and intellectual night.

We are able at the preſent day, when Engliſh proſe has again appeared with more than its wonted luſtre, to eſtimate the merits of theſe favoured writers with fairneſs and impartiality.

Let us begin with the writings of Addiſon. No juſt obſerver can recollect the ſhare which belongs to him in the volumes of the Spectator, without feeling that Engliſh proſe, and the polite literature of his country, are deeply indebted to him. His papers on Wit, on the Pleaſures of the Imagination, on the character of ſir Roger de Coverley, and many others, are entitled to no vulgar encomium. Addiſon was a man of conſiderable taſte, which he has not only demon-

ſtrated by the juſtneſs and delicacy of the majority of his criticiſms, but alſo by the formation of a ſtyle, which is for the moſt part equally diſtant from the affectation of a literary fop, and the ſtiffneſs of a pedant.

His ſtyle is commended by Johnſon in the following terms. "[He] ſometimes deſcends too much to the language of converſation; yet if his language had been leſs idiomatical, it might have loſt ſomewhat of its genuine Anglicifm. What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wiſh to be energetick; he is never rapid, and he never ſtagnates. His ſentences have neither ſtudied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and eaſy. Whoever wiſhes to attain an Engliſh ſtyle, familiar but not coarſe, and elegant but not oſtentatious, muſt give his days and nights to the volumes of Addiſon†."

In a word, we may conclude that we ſhall find in Addiſon, according to the opinion of Johnſon, another "*well of Engliſh undefiled.*"

Nothing can be more glaringly exaggerated than this praiſe. Addiſon is a writer eminently enervated; and few authors, diſtinguiſhed in

† Lives of the Poets.

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the *belles lettres*, and of ſo recent a date, will be found more ſtrikingly looſe and unſyſtematical in their diction.

Let us examine a few paſſages from writings, of which we are told, that they are "never feeble," and "never ſtagnate;" that they are "familiar but not coarſe, and elegant but not oſtentatious."

The following remarks occur in Addiſon's far-famed and ridiculous commentary upon the ballad of Chevy-Chace.

"As *Greece* was a Collection of many Governments, * who ſuffered very much among themſelves, and * gave the Perſian Emperor, who was their common Enemy, many Advantages over them by their mutual Jealouſies and Animoſities, *Homer*, in order to eſtabliſh among them an Union, which was * ſo neceſſary for their Safety, * grounds his Poem upon the Diſcords of the ſeveral *Grecian* Princes who were engaged in a Confederacy againſt an *Aſiatick* Prince, and the ſeveral Advantages which the Enemy gained by * ſuch their Diſcords. At the Time the Poem we are now treating * of was written, the Diſſenſions of the Barons, who were then ſo many petty Princes, * ran very high, * whether they quarrelled among themſelves, or with their Neighbours, * and produced unſpeakable Cala-

mities to the Country: The Poet to deter Men from ſuch unnatural Contentions, deſcribes a * bloody Battel and dreadful Scene of Death, occaſioned by the mutual Feuds which reigned in the Families of an *Engliſh* and *Scotch* Nobleman. That he deſigned this for the * Inſtruction of his Poem, we may learn from his four laſt Lines, in which, after the Example of the Modern Tragedians, he draws from it a Precept for the Benefit of his Readers."

The following paragraphs occur in one of the papers, in which the author undertakes to develop the character of ſir Roger de Coverley.

" There is one Particular which I have ſeldom ſeen but at Sir ROGER's; it is uſual in all other Places, * that Servants fly from the Parts of the Houſe through which their Maſter is paſſing; on the contrary, here they induſtriouſly place themſelves in his Way; and it is on both Sides, as it were, * underſtood as a Viſit, when the Servants appear without calling."——

" But my good Friend is * above theſe little Inſtances of Good-will, in beſtowing only Trifles on his Servants; a good Servant to him is ſure * of having it in his Choice very ſoon * of being no Servant * at all. As I before obſerved, he is ſo good a * Huſband, and knows ſo thoroughly that the * Skill of the Purſe is the Cardinal Virtue

tue of this Life; * I ſay, he knows ſo well that Frugality is the Support of Generoſity, that he can often ſpare a large Fine when a Tenement * falls, and give * that Settlement to a good Servant who * has a Mind to * go into the World, or make a Stranger pay the Fine to that Servant, for his more comfortable Maintenance, if he ſtays in his Service.

"A Man of Honour and Generoſity conſiders * it would be miſerable * to himſelf to * have no Will but that of another, though it were * of the beſt Perſon * breathing, and for that Reaſon * goes on as * faſt as he is able to * put his Servants into independent * Livelihoods. The greateſt part of Sir ROGER's Eſtate is tenanted by Perſons who have * ſerved himſelf or his Anceſtors. It was to me extreamly pleaſant to obſerve the * Viſitants from ſeveral * Parts to welcome his Arrival * into the Country, and all the Difference that I could * take Notice of between the late Servants who came to ſee him and thoſe who * ſtaid in the Family, was, that * theſe latter were * looked upon as finer Gentlemen and better Courtiers."

"* One might, on this Occaſion, recount the * Senſe that great Perſons in all Ages have * had of the Merit of their Dependents, and the heroick Services which * Men have * done their Maſ-

ters

ters in the * Extremity of their Fortunes; * and ſhewn, to their * undone Patrons, that Fortune * was all the Difference between them."——

"I remembred indeed Sir ROGER ſaid * there lived a very worthy Gentleman to whom he was highly obliged, * without mentioning any thing further."

It were an endleſs taſk to hunt this author through all his negligences, uncouthneſſes and ſoleciſms. I will only ſubjoin one further extract, from a paper in which he is recommending, "that the honeſt Men of all Partics ſhould enter into a * Kind of Aſſociation for the Defence of one another, and the * Confuſion of their common Enemies."

The propoſed bond of aſſociation concludes with the following ſentence.

"And we ſhall upon all Occaſions oppoſe ſuch Perſons * that * upon any Day of the Year ſhall call Black white, or White black, with the utmoſt Peril of our Lives and Fortunes." The author proceeds:

"Were there ſuch a Combination of honeſt Men, who without any Regard to Places would endeavour to extirpate * all ſuch furious Zealots as would ſacrifice one half of their Country to the Paſſion and Intereſt of the other; * as alſo ſuch infamous Hypocrites, * that are * for promoting

noting their own Advantage, * under Colour of the publick Good; * with all the profligate immoral Retainers to each Side, that have nothing to recommend them but an implicit Submiſſion to their Leaders; we ſhould ſoon ſee that furious Party-Spirit extinguiſhed, which may * in Time expoſe us to the Deriſion and Contempt of all the Nations * about us."

The meanneſs of compoſition in this paſſage, can only be equalled by the abſurdity of its malice, or the impotence of its wit.

We now come to Swift, reſpecting whom the great authority of Lowth has pronounced, that "he is one of the moſt correct, and perhaps the beſt of our proſe writers." No author was ever more applauded by his contemporaries: no author ever produced a greater public effect, than he is ſuppoſed to have done, by his Conduct of the Allies, and his Drapier's Letters. For his ſolicitude about accuracy, he deſerves to be conſidered with reſpect. For the ſtern and inflexible integrity of his principles, and the profound ſagacity of his ſpeculations, he will be honoured by a diſtant poſterity.

We will confine ourſelves in our ſpecimens, to his Tale of a Tub and Gulliver's Travels; the two beſt of his works; the former written with all the rich exuberance of youthful imagination; the

the latter in his laſt ſtage of intellectual cultivation, and, as Milton expreſſes it, "the moſt conſummat act of his fidelity and ripeneſs †."

The Tale of a Tub is a work, of perhaps greater felicity of wit, and more ludicrous combinations of ideas, than any other book in the world. It is however, written in ſo ſtrange a ſtyle of "banter," to make uſe of one of the author's words, or rather in ſo low and anomalous a ſlang, which perhaps Swift conſidered as the neceſſary concomitant of wit; that it is by no means proper to be cited as an example of juſt compoſition. The reader however may not be aware of this; and, to remove the ſcruples with which he may poſſibly be impreſſed, I will adduce a few inſtances.

"To this Syſtem of Religion were * tagg'd ſeveral * ſubaltern Doctrines, which were * entertain'd with great Vogue: * as particularly, the Faculties of the Mind were * deduced by the Learned among them in this manner:—* All which required abundance of * *Fineſſe* and *Delicateſſe* to * manage with advantage, as well as a ſtrict * Obſervance * after Times and Faſhions." Sect II.

"A while after there * came up * *all in Faſhion*, a pretty ſort of *flame-colour'd Sattin* for Linings." d°.

† See page 411.

To

"To ſupport this Grandeur, which he ſoon began to * conſider could not be maintain'd without a better * *Fonde* than * what he was born to; after much Thought, he * caſt about at laſt—." Sect. IV.

" Sometimes he would ſend them [his bulls] * out upon Errands of great importance; * where it is wonderful * to recount, and perhaps the cautious Reader may * think much to believe it, an *Appetitus ſenſibilis,* * deriving it ſelf through the whole Family, from their noble Anceſtors, Guardians of the *Golden Fleece*; * they continued ſo extremely fond of *Gold,* ——." d°.

" And that which was * the good of it, he would—." d°.

The following is a curious example of negligent and disjointed compoſition.

" But Faſhions perpetually altering in that Age, the Scholaſtick Brother * grew weary of * ſearching further Evaſions, and ſolving everlaſting Contradictions. Reſolv'd therefore * at all hazards to comply with the Modes of the World, * they concerted * Matters together, and agreed unanimouſly to lock up their Father's Will in a *Strong Box,* brought out of *Greece* or *Italy* (I have * forgot which) and * trouble themſelves no farther to examine it, but only * refer

to its Authority whenever they * thought fit. * In conſequence whereof, a while after it * grew a general Mode to wear an infinite Number of *Points*, moſt of them *tag'd with Silver*. * Upon which the Scholar pronounced *ex Cathedra*, that *Points* were abſolutely *Jure Paterno*, as they might * very well remember. 'Tis true indeed, the Faſhion preſcrib'd ſomewhat more than * were directly nam'd in the Will: However * that they, as Heirs general of their Father, had power to make and add certain Clauſes for publick Emolument, though not * deducible *totidem verbis* from the Letter of the Will; or * elſe, *Multa abſurda ſequerentur*." Sect. II.

Gulliver's Travels is a book in which the author ſeems to have called up all his vigilance and ſkill in the article of ſtyle: and, as the plan of his fiction led to that ſimplicity in which he delighted, no book can be taken as a fairer ſpecimen of the degree of cultivation at which the Engliſh language had at that time arrived. Swift was perhaps the man of the moſt powerful mind of the time in which he lived.

The following may ſerve as a few examples of the looſe and incorrect conſtruction with which this performance is written.

" In one of theſe Cells were ſeveral Globes or Balls

Balls of a moſt ponderous Metal, about the bigneſs of our Heads, * and required a ſtrong Hand to lift them." Part I, Chap. II.

" When this Inventory was read * over to the Emperor, he directed me, * although in very gentle Terms, to deliver up the ſeveral Particulars. He firſt called for my Scymiter, which I took out * Scabbard * and all." d°.

" Even the Emperor, although he * ſtood his ground, could not recover himſelf * in ſome time." d°.

" His Speech was to the following Effect, * for I took Notes of it as ſoon as he left me." Chap. VII.

" Theſe were * ſearched and ſought out through the whole Nation, by the Prince and his wiſeſt Counſellors, among ſuch of the Prieſthood, as were moſt * deſervedly diſtinguiſhed by the Sanctity of their Lives, and the Depth of their Erudition; * who were indeed the Spiritual Fathers of the Clergy and the People." Part II, Chap. VI.

" * Upon what I ſaid in relation to our Courts of Juſtice, his Majeſty deſired to be ſatisfied in ſeveral Points: And, * this I was the better able to do, having been formerly almoſt ruined by a long Suit in Chancery, which was decreed for me with Coſts. He aſked, what time

time was uſually ſpent in determining between Right and Wrong, and * what Degree of Expence." d°.

What can be more disjointed and aukward than the conſtruction of the following paſſage?

" I ſwore and ſubſcribed to theſe Articles with great Chearfulneſs and Content, although ſome of them were not ſo honourable as I could have wiſhed; * which proceeded wholly from the Malice of *Skyreſh Bolgolam* the High Admiral: * whereupon my Chains were immediately unlocked, and I was at full liberty; the Emperor himſelf in Perſon did me the Honour to be * by at the whole Ceremony." Part I, Chap. III.

Again: " I told his Majeſty that I was come according to my Promiſe, and with the Licence of the Emperor my Maſter, to have the Honour of ſeeing ſo mighty a Monarch, and to offer him any Service in my power, * conſiſtent with my Duty to my own Prince; * not mentioning a * Word of my Diſgrace, becauſe I had hitherto no regular Information of it, and might ſuppoſe myſelf wholly ignorant of any * ſuch Deſign; * neither could I reaſonably conceive that the Emperor would diſcover the Secret while I was out of his power: * Wherein, however, it ſoon appeared I was deceived." Chap. VII.

Again:

Again: "I walked with Intrepidity five or ſix times before the very Head of the Cat, and came within half a Yard of her; * whereupon ſhe drew her ſelf back, * as if ſhe were more afraid of me: I had leſs Apprehenſion concerning the Dogs, * whereof three or four came into the Room, as it is uſual in Farmers Houſes; * one of which was a Maſtiff equal in bulk to four Elephants, and a Grey-hound ſomewhat taller than the Maſtiff, but not ſo large." Part II, Chap. I.

Two authors of high eminence and great celebrity, who may be conſidered as belonging to the age of queen Anne, are Shafteſbury and Bolingbroke. They were both of them men of admirable talents. Shafteſbury devoted himſelf particularly to the ſtudy of the ancients, and propoſed in his writings to give a poliſh and elegance to the Engliſh language it had not yet received. His propenſities led him to a total ſecluſion from actual life; and he was unwearied in the labour of turning his periods, and finiſhing his compoſitions. Bolingbroke was a man whoſe very ſoul was eloquence. The magnitude of his genius, and the impetuous torrent of his ideas, ſeem, when we read, to bear away all oppoſition before them. Yet, when we are upon the ſubject of correctneſs of

compoſition, theſe authors preſent us rather with examples to avoid, than examples to imitate. They may ſerve to illuſtrate the ſtate of our language, when men, like them, could be ſo aſtoniſhingly erroneous.

Shafteſbury was an author, the whole habits of whoſe mind appear to have been uncommonly elegant. Yet we trace in him an aſſemblage the moſt ill aſſorted and incongruous. His paſſion for elegance is immoderate and ungovernable. At one time it leads him to the ſtiffeſt and moſt far-fetched expreſſions, under the notion of being ſingularly eaſy. At another time the ſame notion induces him to crowd his pages with vulgariſms and buffoonery. It is impoſſible that ſo accompliſhed and original a writer, could have fallen into ſuch egregious errors; if there had at that time been any thing ſufficiently ſtable in our language.

Take the following example from his Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author.

"This was, among the Antients, * that celebrated *Delphick* Inſcription, * RECOGNISE YOURSELF; which was * as much as to ſay, *Divide your-ſelf* or *Be* Two. For if the Diviſion were * rightly made, all * *within* wou'd of courſe, they thought, be * rightly underſtood, and prudently * manag'd. Such Confidence they * had

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in this * Home-*Dialect* of SOLILOQUY. For it was accounted the * peculiar of Philoſophers and wiſe Men, to be able * *to hold themſelves* * *in Talk.* And it was their Boaſt on this account, "That they were never leſs *alone*, than when * *by themſelves*." A Knave, they thought, cou'd never be * *by himſelf.* Not that his Conſcience was always ſure * of * giving him Diſturbance; but he had not, they ſuppos'd, ſo much Intereſt with himſelf, as * to exert this generous Faculty, and raiſe himſelf *a Companion*; * who being * fairly admitted into Partnerſhip, wou'd quickly mend his Partner, and * ſet his affairs on a * right * foot.

"One would think, there was nothing eaſier for us, than to know our own Minds, and underſtand * what our main *Scope* was; what we plainly * drove * at, and what we propos'd to ourſelves, as our * *End*, in every Occurrence of our Lives. But our Thoughts have generally ſuch an obſcure * implicit Language, that 'tis the * hardeſt thing * in the world to * make 'em ſpeak out diſtinctly. For this reaſon, the right Method is to give 'em Voice and * Accent. And this, in our * default, is what the *Moraliſts* or *Philoſophers* endeavour to do, * to our hand; when, as is uſual, they * hold us out a kind of *vocal* Looking-Glaſs, draw Sound out of our

Breaſt, and inſtruct us to * perſonate ourſelves, * in the plaineſt manner." Part I, Sect. II.

This is ſurely ſufficiently quaint and uncouth. What does the reader think of the buffoonery of the following paſſage?

" We have a * notable Inſtance of this *Freedom* in one of our ſacred Authors. * As patient as JOB is ſaid to be, it cannot be denied that he * makes bold enough with GOD, and takes his Providence * roundly * to taſk. His Friends, indeed, plead * hard with him, and uſe all Arguments, right or wrong, to * patch up Objections, and * ſet the Affairs of Providence upon an equal * Foot." Letter concerning Enthuſiaſm, Sect. IV.

Again: " There are ſome, it ſeems, of our * good Brethren, the *French* Proteſtants, lately * come among us, who are * mightily taken with this Primitive way. They have * ſet a-foot the Spirit of Martyrdom * to a wonder in their own Country; and they long to * be trying it here, if we will * give 'em leave, and afford 'em the Occaſion: * that is to ſay, if we will only * do 'em the favour to hang or impriſon 'em; if we will only * be ſo obliging as to * break their Bones for 'em, * after their Country-faſhion * blow up their Zeal, and * ſtir a-freſh the Coals of Perſecution." d°. Sect. III.

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The dedication to ſir Robert Walpole, then earl of Orford, prefixed by Bolingbroke to his Remarks on the Hiſtory of England, has been cited by ſome perſons as the model of the ſtyle of the celebrated Junius. A higher praiſe could with difficulty be aſſigned it; and, on that and other accounts, it ſeems to be one of the faireſt ſources from which we could draw our examples of this author's mode of compoſition.

"It is not my deſign," ſays he, "to tread the beaten track, and compare you either to FABIUS or CICERO. To inſinuate * you ever had * a type or parallel, is to injure you. No, you are * yourſelf; * an original; * a nonſuch; nor it is likely poſterity ſhould ever produce * ſuch another. It is enough for me to * give you your own; I aſpire to no more; and that I dare not attempt but by figure only *."

"Though I profeſſedly ſpread the canvaſs for your portrait, I could not help * edging in a ſlight ſketch of my own. I ſhall not, however, forget that your lordſhip is to be the principal figure, nor that I ought to be content with an obſcure corner in the piece; * like your equerry, holding your ſtirrup, or preſenting that * head-piece which none but you would preſume to put on; or rather as your 'ſquire, aſſiſting to diſarm you; or helping you out of your ſaddle, &c."

"Whether you are to * be cut or drop from the tree, I am afraid to pronounce."

"A tremendous prophecy, my lord, and what you can never be * out of the reach of, till you are in your grave."

"The old * jingle of *honores mutant mores* you have the glory, my lord, to be an illuſtrious exception * to."

"It is notorious you have now as much to beſtow as I expected * then."

The concluſion of the following ſentence will ſhow that an expreſſion, which has by many been miſtaken for a grace of modern rhetoric, can exhibit a title more venerable than they imagined.

"On the ſtage, indeed, when a maſter-poet exerts his power over the paſſions, his victim at the end of the fourth act is frequently made to * ſing a requiem to his cares and ſorrows, * as if for ever * done away."

Theſe are by no means all the flowers of a ſimilar kind, that might be gathered, out of a dedication often thinly printed pages.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

Age of George the Second.

WE come now to the laſt period of our inveſtigation; the age of king George the ſecond.

Some of the moſt illuſtrious writers of the preſent reign, began their literary carreer in the preceding reign, and were born as early in the eighteenth century, as certain authors who moſt properly belong to king George the ſecond. It ſeems moſt natural however to confine our retroſpect, to thoſe writers whoſe works were either wholly publiſhed under the former monarch, or who, at leaſt, are acknowledged to have then attained to the full diſplay of their genius, and poſſeſſion of their fame.

We may ſelect as ſpecimens of this period, Middleton, Sherlock, Fielding and Smollet. My buſineſs is, to produce ſuch paſſages from theſe authors, as ſhall be calculated to prove that, in point of ſtyle, they fall below the ordinary ſtandard of elegant compoſition at the preſent day.

No production of that age has been more extolled as a model of fine writing, than Middleton's Life of Cicero. Hiſtory had been written among us, before that book made its appearance; but it will probably be found that this is the earlieſt performance in our language, that in any adequate degree ſeems worthy of the genius of hiſtory, if we regard her, in the light in which the ancients were accuſtomed to regard her, as one of the muſes.

But, though this work is to be eſteemed upon the whole an able, excellent and elegant production, it has many peculiarities now deſervedly antiquated. Middleton is an eloquent writer, but his verboſity is glaring, and his conſtruction perplexing and tedious. His phraſeology is often pedantic, and often unneceſſarily loaded with particles. Preciſion of ſpeech, that conveys its meaning in the moſt direct and unincumbered manner, is no part of his praiſe. The vigour of his genius ſeems to pant and labour under the burthen of his language.

The following paſſages may ſerve to illuſtrate this deſcription.

Speaking of the period, in which it was cuſtomary for the young men of Rome to aſſume the manly gown, the author proceeds: "They were introduced at the ſame time into *the Forum*,

or

or the great ſquare of the City, where the Aſſemblies of the people were held, and the Magiſtrates uſed to harangue * to them from *the Roſtra*, and where all the public pleadings and judicial procedings were uſually tranſacted: this therefore was the grand School of buſineſs and eloquence; the ſcene, on which all the affairs of the Empire were determined, and where the foundation of their hopes and fortunes * were to be * laid: * ſo that they were introduced into it with much ſolemnity, attended by all the friends and dependents of the family, and after divine rites performed in *the Capitol*, were committed to the * ſpecial protection of ſome eminent Senator, diſtinguiſhed for his eloquence or knowledge of the laws, to be inſtructed by his advice in the management of civil affairs, and to form themſelves by his example for uſeful members and Magiſtrates of the Republic." Sect. I.

After enumerating the ſtudies of Cicero, Dr. Middleton concludes: "All which accompliſhments were but * miniſterial and ſubſervient to that, on which his hopes and ambition were ſingly placed, the reputation *of an Orator*." d°.

"This practice [the vote, *ut viderent conſules, ne quid reſpublica detrimenti capiat*], tho' * in uſe from the earlieſt times, had always been complained * of by the Tribuns, as an infringe-

ment of the conſtitution, by giving to the Senate an arbitrary power over the lives of Citizens, which could not legally be taken away without a hearing and judgment of the whole people. But the chief * grudge * to * it was, * from its being a perpetual check to the deſigns of the ambitious and popular, who aſpired to any power not allowed by the laws: it was not difficult for them to delude the multitude; but the Senate was not ſo eaſily* managed, who *by that ſingle vote of committing the Republic to the Conſuls*, could fruſtrate at once all the effects of their popularity, when carried to a * point which was dangerous to the State: for ſince by * virtue of it, the *Tribuns* themſelves, whoſe perſons were held ſacred might be * taken off without ſentence or trial, when engaged in any traiterous practices, * all attempts of that kind muſt neceſſarily be hazardous and deſperate." Sect. III.

The following is a part of our author's character of Sylla.

"His family was noble and *Patrician*, which yet, through the indolency of his Anceſtors, had * made no figure in the Republic for many generations, and was almoſt ſunk into obſcurity, till he * produced it again into light, by aſpiring to the honors of the State. He was a lover and patron of polite letters, having been carefully

* inſti-

inſtituted himſelf in all the learning of *Greece* and *Rome;* but from a peculiar gaiety of temper, and fondneſs for the company of Mimics and Players, * was drawn, when young, into a life of luxury and pleaſure; * ſo that when he was ſent *Quæſtor to* MARIUS *in the Jugurthine war,* MARIUS complained, that in ſo rough and deſperate a ſervice chance had given him *ſo ſoft and delicate a Quæſtor.*" Sect. II.

I have been more particular in my extracts from Middleton, as this author perhaps affords the moſt adequate ſpecimen of the ſtyle of the period in which he wrote. The majority of writers at that time, who ſought the praiſe of eloquence, appear to have affected this plenitude of diction, the art of overlaying their meaning with the endleſſneſs of their phraſes. At firſt ſight therefore we ſhould be apt to imagine that they had degenerated from the model of the days of queen Anne. But, upon a nearer inſpection, we ſhall find that they excelled their predeceſſors in propriety of conſtruction, though they certainly did not excel them in choice of words or neatneſs of diction.

It would be idle however to load theſe pages with examples after the Middletonian mode. Our buſineſs is with authors who ſought to outſtrip the practice of their contemporaries.

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It muſt be conſidered as an argument of the paucity of genius during this period, that we are obliged to have recourſe to Sherlock, an author whoſe character, though unprecedentedly high among his brethren in the church, never roſe to the dignity of general fame.

The elegance of Sherlock is rather to be found in his ideas; and it is chiefly from a confuſion of mind in his readers, that it has been transferred from its proper ſeat, and aſcribed to his compoſition. His manner is for the moſt part cloſe to his ſubject, and he diſdains every thing impertinent and merely ornamental; but he is uſually hard, ſcholaſtic and even ſomewhat repellent in his language.

His famous parallel between Chriſt and Mahomet, which is perhaps the only truly eloquent paſſage in his works, is indeed happily expreſſed. He muſt have been a very curſory obſerver of ſtyle, who does not know, that enthuſiaſm of ſentiment ſeldom fails to produce a momentary happineſs of language. But, as if this were wholly foreign to the writer, no ſooner does he cloſe the deſcriptive part, and attempt to ſum up the reſult, than his manner becomes comparatively bald and mean.

"When Natural Religion," ſays the preacher, "has viewed both, aſk, Which is the Prophet of God?

God? But her Anſwer we have already * had; when ſhe ſaw Part of this Scene * through the Eyes of the Centurion who attended at the Croſs; by him ſhe * ſpoke and ſaid, *Truly this* Man was the Son of God." Vol. I, Diſcourſe IX.

The following paſſage from the ſame Diſcourſe, may ſerve as a ſpecimen of this author's uſual manner.

" But here the Queſtion is aſked, How ſhall we diſtinguiſh between the Pretences to Revelation, which are ſo many and various, * all of which have an equal Right to be heard, * that 'tis endleſs to look for Religion in ſuch a * Croud of Pretenders to it, and difficult to determine the Merit of the ſeveral Claims.——

" So that all Religions [in the Heathen World] were eſteemed equally good, and * the moſt any Religion pretended * to was a local Authority, which reached no farther than the Laws of the Country * did: And, unleſs Men are * for giving more to the pretended Heathen Revelations, than * ever they claimed for themſelves, or was claimed for them by thoſe who introduced them and lived under them, they cannot be * brought into this Queſtion, ſince they have no * Relation to us, any more than the many civil Laws and Conſtitutions of the ſame Countries * had: And Men

Men may as reaſonably complain * of the great Variety of civil and municipal Laws that diſtract their Obedience, and then * inſtance in the Laws of the *Medes* and *Perſians*, * as they now complain of the Variety of Revelations, * inſtancing in ſuch as, if they were true, * concern them as little as the Laws of *Perſia* * do."

Fielding's novel of Tom Jones is certainly one of the moſt admirable performances in the world. The ſtructure of the ſtory perhaps has never been equalled; nor is there any work that more frequently or more happily excites emotions of the moſt elevated and delicious generoſity.

The ſtyle however is glaringly inferior to the conſtituent parts of the work. It is feeble, coſtive, and ſlow. It cannot boaſt of periods elegantly turned or delicately pointed. The book is interſperſed with long diſcourſes of religious or moral inſtruction; but theſe have no novelty of conception or impreſſive ſagacity of remark, and are little ſuperior to what any reader might hear at the next pariſh-church. The general turn of the work is intended to be ſarcaſtic and ironical; but the irony is hard, pedantic and unnatural. Whoever will compare the hide-bound ſportiveneſs of Fielding, with the flowing and graceful hilarity of Sterne, muſt be ſtruck with the degree

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in which the national taſte was improved, before the latter author could have made his appearance.

The following is part of a ſermon, addreſſed to the ſuppoſed mother of the hero, and put by the author into the mouth of his abortive character of Allworthy. The judicious reader will perceive that it is built upon one of the coldeſt and vileſt quibbles imaginable.

"Love, however barbarouſly we may corrupt and pervert * its meaning, * as it is a laudable, is a rational paſſion, and can never be violent, but when reciprocal; * for though the Scripture bids us love our enemies, it * means not with that fervent love which we naturally bear towards our friends; much leſs that we ſhould ſacrifice to them our lives, and, what ought to be dearer to us, our innocence. Now, in what light, but that of an enemy, can a reaſonable woman regard the man who ſolicits her * to entail on herſelf all the miſery I have deſcribed to you, and who would purchaſe to himſelf a ſhort, trivial, contemptible pleaſure, ſo greatly * at her expence? For, by the laws of cuſtom, the whole ſhame, with all its dreadful conſequences, falls entirely upon her. Can love, which always ſeeks the * good of its object, attempt to betray a woman into a * bargain where ſhe is ſo greatly to be the loſer? If

ſuch a corrupter, therefore, ſhould have the impudence to pretend a real affection for * her, ought not the woman to regard him, not only as an enemy, but as the worſt of all enemies; a falſe, deſigning, treacherous, pretended friend, who intends not only to * debauch her body, but her underſtanding at the ſame time?" Book I, Chap. VII.

Here follow ſome ſpecimens of the ſtyle of irony, or rather buffoonery, in which nearly the whole work is written.

"As this is one of thoſe * deep obſervations which very few readers can be ſuppoſed capable of making themſelves, I have thought proper to * lend them my aſſiſtance; but this is a favour rarely to be expected in the courſe of my work. Indeed, I ſhall ſeldom * or never ſo indulge them, unleſs in ſuch inſtances as this, where nothing but the inſpiration with which we writers are * gifted, can poſſibly enable any one to make the diſcovery." Ch. V.

"The * ſagacious reader will not, from this ſimile, imagine theſe poor people had any apprehenſion of the deſign with which Mrs. Wilkins was now * coming towards them; but as the great beauty of the ſimile may poſſibly ſleep * theſe hundred years, till ſome future commentator ſhall * take this work in hand, I think proper

per to * lend the reader a little aſſiſtance in this place." Chap. VI.

Let us add a few paſſages under the article of ſtyle in general. The firſt is another extract from the ſermons of Allworthy.

" But to relieve our brethren only with our ſuperfluities; to be charitable (I muſt uſe the word) rather * at the expence of our coffers than ourſelves; to ſave ſeveral families from miſery, rather than hang up an extraordinary picture in our houſes, or gratify any other *idle*, ridiculous vanity; this ſeems to be only being * *Chriſtians*; nay, indeed, only being * human creatures. Nay, I will venture to go farther; it is being in ſome degree * epicures: for what could the greateſt epicure wiſh rather than * to eat with many mouths inſtead of one? which, I think, may be * predicated of any one who knows that the bread of many is owing to his * own largeſſes." Book II, Chap. V.

" Allworthy here * betook *himſelf* to thoſe pleaſing ſlumbers which a heart that * hungers * after goodneſs is * apt to enjoy when thoroughly ſatisfied: as theſe are poſſibly ſweeter than * what are occaſioned by any other * hearty meal, I ſhould * take more pains to diſplay them to the reader, if I knew any air to recommend him * to

for the procuring ſuch an appetite." Book I, Chap. III.

"As to my concern for what is paſt, I know you will ſpare my bluſhes the repetition *," Chap. VII.

"The only way, as it appears to me, of ſolving this difficulty, is by imputing it to * that diſtance which was now * grown between the lady and the houſekeeper; * whether this aroſe from a jealouſy in Mrs. Bliſil, * that Wilkins ſhewed too great a reſpect to the foundling; * for while * ſhe * was endeavouring to ruin the little infant, in order to ingratiate herſelf with the captain, ſhe * was every day commending it more and more before Allworthy, as his fondneſs for it every day increaſed. This, notwithſtanding all the care ſhe took at other times to expreſs the * direct contrary to Mrs. Bliſil, perhaps offended that delicate lady, who certainly now hated Mrs. Wilkins; and though ſhe did not, or poſſibly could not, abſolutely remove her from her place, ſhe found, however, the * means of * making her life very uneaſy. This Mrs. Wilkins, at length, ſo reſented, that ſhe very openly ſhewed all * manner of reſpect and fondneſs to little Tommy, in oppoſition to Mrs. Bliſil." Book II, Chap. V.

From the examination of Fielding we proceed to that of Smollet.

The efforts of the firſt of theſe writers, in the novel of Tom Jones, in the character of Parſon Adams, and a few other inſtances, are exquiſitely meritorious. But, when Fielding delights us, he appears to go out of himſelf. The general character of his genius, will probably be found to be jejune and puerile. For the truth of this remark, we may appeal, in particular, to his comedies.

Every thing that is the reverſe of this may be affirmed of Smollet. He has publiſhed more volumes, upon more ſubjects, than perhaps any other author of modern date; and, in all, he has left marks of his genius. The greater part of his novels are peculiarly excellent. He is nevertheleſs a haſty writer; when he affects us moſt, we are aware that he might have done more. In all his works of invention, we find the ſtamp of a mighty mind. In his lighteſt ſketches, there is nothing frivolous, trifling and effeminate. In his moſt glowing portraits, we acknowledge a mind at eaſe, rather eſſaying its powers, than taſking them. We applaud his works; but it is with a profounder ſentiment that we meditate his capacity.

The ſtyle of Smollet has never been greatly

admired, and it is brought forward here merely to ſhow in what manner men of the higheſt talents, and of great eminence in the *belles lettres*, could write forty or fifty years ago.

His moſt conſiderable production is Roderick Random. Let the reader take as a ſpecimen of his ſtyle, the ſtory of Mrs. Sagely, in the beginning of the ſecond volume, as related by herſelf.

" It is of little conſequence to tell the names of my parents, who * are dead many years ago: let it ſuffice to aſſure you, they were wealthy, and had no other child than me, * ſo that I was looked upon as heireſs to a conſiderable eſtate, and * tiezed with addreſſes on that account. Among the number of my admirers, there was a young gentleman of no fortune, * whoſe ſole dependence was on his promotion in the army, * in which at that time he bore a lieutenant's commiſſion.—I conceived an affection for this * amiable officer, which in a ſhort time increaſed to a violent * paſſion, and, * without entering into minute circumſtances, married him privately.—We had not * enjoyed one another long, in ſtolen interviews, when he was ordered with his regiment to Flanders; but before he ſet out, it was agreed between us, that he ſhould declare our marriage to my father by letter, and implore

implore his pardon for the ſtep we had taken without his approbation.—* This was done while I was * abroad viſiting; and juſt as I was about to return home, I received a letter from my father, * importing, that ſince I had acted ſo undutifully and meanly, as to marry a beggar, without his privity or conſent, to the diſgrace of his family, as well as the diſappointment of his hopes, he * renounced me to the miſerable fate I had entailed upon myſelf, and charged me never to * ſet foot * within his doors again.—This rigid ſentence was confirmed by my mother, who, in a poſtſcript, * gave me to underſtand that her ſentiments were exactly conformable to thoſe of my father, and that I might * ſave myſelf the trouble of making any applications, * for her reſolutions were unalterable. —Thunder-ſtruck with my evil fortune, * I called a coach, and drove to my huſband's lodgings, where I found him waiting the * event of his letter."——

It is unneceſſary to tranſcribe the remainder of the paſſage. Suffice it to ſay that it is in vain that, in any part of it, we ſhould ſearch for the ſcholar, the man of education, or the man of taſte. The compoſer of fictitious writings indeed, ſometimes lowers his ſtyle to ſuit the meanneſs or abſurdity of his perſonages. But this

ought never to be done, except where it is attended with comic effect. It is the office of the poet and the noveliſt to adorn the ſtyle of their characters, and to give to real life the moſt impreſſive form. We do not ſuppoſe the real Hamlet always to have ſpoken with that felicity or that energy of diction, which Shakeſpear has beſtowed on him. Mrs. Sagely's narrative might have been written with ſimplicity; but it ſhould have been written with elegance. On the contrary we find little in it above the ſtyle of a ſervant-maid over her winter fire.

Reſpect for the great name of Smollet, will not ſuffer me to paſs over in ſilence his Hiſtory of England, the moſt important of his compilations. It is not to the purpoſe of the preſent enquiry to obſerve that the general concoction of the work, reminds us rather of the promptings of the bookſeller, than of the talents of its author. It is not however to be wondered at, that the ſtyle of a work, thus crudely compoſed, ſhould not be ſuch as to put contemporary authors to the bluſh.

In the volume in which the war of 1739 is narrated, Smollet talks of the "inequality of the * match" between ſir Robert Walpole's pamphleteers and their antagoniſts; and adds, that "he reſolved to ſeize the firſt opportunity to

* choak

* choak thoſe canals through which the torrent of cenſure had flowed upon his character." He ſays that, to avoid a rupture with Spain, the miniſter "endeavoured to obtain ſome ſort of ſatisfaction by * dint of memorials and negociations." Walpole, he obſerves, objected to certain reſolutions propoſed by the oppoſition, that "they would * cramp the miniſters in their endeavours to compromiſe theſe differences." He deſcribes the earl of Ilay, as "* ſtaunch to the miniſter, and invariably true to his own intereſt." Having brought the pretender in his narrative as far as Fort William, he tells us that he "* forthwith marched to Perth." In undertaking to account for the miſcarriage of the invader, he has the following remark: "He was at the ſame time * regaled with the promiſe of powerful ſuccours from France, though the miniſtry of that kingdom were never * hearty in his cauſe: * nevertheleſs they foreſaw, that his appearance in England would embarraſs the government, and make a conſiderable diverſion in their favour." Upon the war of 1739 he generally obſerves: "England, from being the umpire, was now become a party in all continental quarrels; and inſtead of * trimming the balance of Europe, laviſhed * away her * blood and treaſure, in ſupporting the intereſt and allies of a puny electorate in the North of Germany."

SECT. VII.

Concluſion.

THE whole of the preceding extracts is drawn, as much as poſſible, from the earlieſt editions of the reſpective works: ſince various circumſtances of orthography, capitals, and other minute articles, properly enter into the hiſtory of the language, and ſerve to render the portrait here attempted to be delineated, more entire and complete.

It was propoſed to draw our ſpecimens from the authors in each ſucceſſive period who have been moſt highly and publicly commended. There are other writers who have obtained the ſuffrage of individuals of great authority and taſte, and who may in ſome reſpects be ſuperior to the authors here uſed. But theſe will probably be allowed by the impartial enquirer, to afford a ſufficient baſis upon which to reſt our inference.

The propoſition intended to be eſtabliſhed is that the ordinary ſtandard of elegant compoſition at the preſent day, is ſuperior to the ſtandard of Engliſh compoſition at any preceding period.

riod. This is of courſe a propoſition that does not ſo well admit of being ſupported by an exhibition of affirmative inſtances. If the doctrine of this eſſay be true, it will probably follow that no year paſſes without producing half a dozen new books or pamphlets which might fairly be referred to by way of exemplification.

Another difficulty contributes to render the exhibition of affirmative inſtances impracticable. Shall we reſt the ſtreſs of the queſtion upon the more modern writers having greater beauties, or fewer faults? The latter is probably more appoſite to the ſupport of our propoſition. But, in either caſe, how voluminous muſt be the extracts that ſhould ſufficiently eſtabliſh ſo complicated a point? How ſhall the reader be ſatisfied of the fairneſs and unaſſailable impartiality with which ſuch ſelections ſhall be made? And the moſt abſolute impartiality is neceſſary, to render them the adequate ſubject of ſuch a compariſon.

Having therefore attempted to ſhew the progreſs of the Engliſh language in its inferior ſtages, the laſt ſtage muſt be committed to the candour and diſcernment of every reader.

With reſpect to the earlier authors it is alſo to be obſerved, that the ſhort extracts here given, are totally inadequate to repreſent the tireſome-

neſs

neſs of their manner, or even the frequency of their barbariſms. The more they are examined, by a mind of taſte, and ſuperior to prejudice, the more they will be cenſured in this reſpect.

It may be proper however to explain in what the ſuperior elegance of the preſent period conſiſts. I ſay then, that the Engliſh language is now written with more grammatical propriety, and with a much higher degree of energy and vigour. The ſpirit of philoſophy has infuſed itſelf into the ſtructure of our ſentences. They are no longer thoſe unconnected, disjointed things that ſatisfied the beſt of our anceſtors. The connective particles are uſed with ſome recollection of their genuine meaning. The members of our periods fall into their proper places. They ſatisfy the underſtanding with their arrangement and the ear with their fulneſs. Our writings are no longer the "bald, unjointed chat†" of a laundreſs, but are evidently under the guidance of taſte and ſubſtantial ſcience. They have much of the grace of ſimplicity, and much of the benefit that reſults from ſtudy. We have diſburthened ourſelves of the uſeleſs load of words that incumbered our predeceſſors, and expreſs our thoughts in preciſe words, directly flowing out of the ſubject to be treated.

† Shakeſpear.

It

It is not meant to be affirmed upon this occaſion that the Engliſh language is not capable of great improvement, or that there are not many barbariſms and improprieties ſtill prevalent among us. A long and degrading catalogue of abſurdities might be collected from the dialect of our preſent parliamentary orators; and thoſe phraſes, which are admitted into the moſt poliſhed ſocieties, and uſed upon the moſt ſolemn occaſions, are too apt to *inſinuate* themſelves into publications otherwiſe elegant. The bench, and the bar, with the exception of one or two individuals, have obſtinately reſiſted all meliorations of expreſſion, as well as of inſtitution; and the ſoleciſms of the ancient Britons, running naked in their woods, might almoſt be conceived to have taken refuge in this ſanctuary. The doctrine of the preſent Eſſay will be ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, if it be allowed, that the more elegant compoſitions of the preſent day, are ſo far beautiful, correct and exemplary in their ſtructure, as deciſively to throw into ſhade in this reſpect every preceding era of our literature.

There are two obvious uſes attending on the diſcuſſion here attempted.

Firſt, to call off our attention from falſe models. To teach us to conſider and analyſe the

the ſtyle of our anceſtors, rather as marking the anomalies, the feebleneſs and laxneſs we are to avoid, than as a ſtandard of imaginary purity. The diſcerning reader has probably remarked in the courſe of our ſpecimens, how much the beſt authors are apt to be miſled, by propoſing to themſelves injudicious models, and ſeeking rather to go back to what we were, than to go forward to higher and nobler improvements.

The ſecond uſe attending on this diſcuſſion, may be in a conſiderable degree admitted, even by thoſe who reject the concluſion intended to be eſtabliſhed. This is perhaps the firſt time in Engliſh philology, that the ſtyle of different writers and different ages, has been attempted to be placed in juxtapoſition, and made the ſubject of accurate compariſon. The more the reader accuſtoms himſelf to this compariſon, the more ſubtle and delicate will be the ideas of ſtyle that he will acquire.

There is no art, the ſubject of human diligence and induſtry, more ſubtle and difficult of acquiſition, than that of writing an excellent ſtyle. Two things are eſpecially neceſſary, a flowing eloquence of language, and an exquiſite propriety of diction.

It is almoſt impoſſible that we ſhould write a good ſtyle in a language to which we are not

natives. To write a good ſtyle requires ſo much minute obſervation, and is a quality produced by ſo vaſt a multitude of ſlight and evaneſcent impreſſions, that it cannot be expected to fall to the lot of a foreigner.

Before we can be maſters of this qualification, we muſt have an accurate notion of the meaning of words, the delicate ſhades of meaning by which they are diverſified, and the various ideas and aſſociations they are calculated to excite: and we muſt have an extenſive acquaintance with their hiſtory. Our words muſt in general be conſidered, as having been expreſſions of the perceptions of our external ſenſes, before they were expreſſions of abſtraction; and it is incumbent upon us, as much as poſſible, to bear in our minds the pictures to which they were originally annexed, that we may judge how far they are decorous in themſelves, or congruous with each other. We muſt not ſuffer them merely to ring upon our ears, and then be repeated by us, like children, without any direct inveſtigation of their force. Nay, after we have become acquainted with this, we have ſtill much to learn. Many words and phraſes, neutral or even elegant in themſelves, have been debaſed by an application to trivial or ignoble objects. On this account, a phraſe will ſometimes im-

preſs

preſs a foreigner with dignified ſenſations, which to a native ſhall appear altogether ludicrous and contemptible. In this reſpect we are very imperfect judges of the writings of the ancients, as we have ſcarcely any acquaintance with their familiar converſation.

When our choice of words is determined, we have next to combine our words into phraſes, and our phraſes into periods. Here the idiom of the language in which we write muſt be accurately underſtood, and for the moſt part rigidly adhered to. It is probably of little conſequence whether the idiom of the Engliſh language, for inſtance, be Gallic or Teutonic, whether it come from the Eaſt or the Weſt. But it muſt have an idiom; it muſt be, to a conſiderable degree, uniform and conſentaneous to itſelf. Thoſe Gallic modes of ſpeaking, which have been introduced by our beſt writers, ought not probably to be rejected, merely becauſe they are Gallic. Even new and unauthoriſed forms of expreſſion may be introduced into a living language, provided it be done ſparingly, provided they be deciſively beautiful or expreſſive, and provided they do not ſo depart from the genius of the language into which they are introduced, as to ſtand out from the ſubſtance with which they are meant to coaleſce. Let us dare to enrich the language in which

which we write, by deſign; but let us not debauch it by inadvertence.

He that would write a good ſtyle muſt have a clear underſtanding and a comprehenſive mind. He muſt have that ductility of thought that ſhall enable him to put himſelf in the place of his reader, and not ſuffer him to take it for granted, becauſe he underſtands himſelf, that every one who comes to him for information will underſtand him. He muſt view his phraſes on all ſides, and be aware of all the ſenſes of which they are ſuſceptible. He muſt ſo chooſe his words, and ſo limit his expreſſions, as to produce an unallayed perſpicuity. There is no fault in writing ſo great as ambiguity and obſcurity.

He muſt have an ear for the harmony of language. This has been found by experience to be by no means the ſame thing as a muſical ear. The moſt exquiſite muſician may want it; and he that has no delight in concords of inarticulate ſound, may poſſeſs it in a ſovereign degree. When he has formed to himſelf this ſpecies of taſte he muſt employ the ſort of muſic it recommends, with a frugal hand. He muſt not pall his readers with a ſatiety of ſweetneſs. What is moſt neceſſary, is that he ſhould avoid the too frequent recurrence of what is broken, abrupt

and

and diſcordant. The true muſic of a good ſtyle, is rather a philoſophically juſt arrangement of ideas, than a laborious cultivation of the arts of ſound.

Laſtly, he muſt have a deciſive and ardent thirſt after ſimplicity. This is the firſt of all beauties. This is the baſis and ground-work of every beauty. Even in the moſt ornamented compoſition, in the "torrent, tempeſt and whirlwind" of eloquence, there muſt be "begotten a temperance, that may give it ſmoothneſs†." He that is not penetrated with a love of ſimplicity, may write ſounding bombaſt or gaudy nothings; but can never be truly either pathetic or ſublime.

A good ſtyle is eſſential to our obtaining from others a juſt conſideration of our thoughts. There can be nothing eminently winning and inſinuating without it. He that writes a bad ſtyle, erects a barrier between himſelf and his reader, and does not allow his reflections and notions to obtain a fair hearing. A man of taſte will often be found, either wholly unable to proceed in reading a work thus diſgraced, or proceeding with diſguſt, and performing his journey through it as a weariſome taſk. The writer is perpetually diverting our thoughts from his

† Shakeſpear.

ſubject,

ſubject, to remark the aukwardneſs or abſurdity of his expreſſions. He either ſtartles us with his uncouthneſs, or compoſes us into hypochondriac liſtleſſneſs by the inanity of his periods.

The true effect of a good ſtyle is to enable us to apprehend the ideas of our author without adulteration. We go forward along with him, and are conſcious of no impediment; we burn with his ardour, and are illuminated with his perſpicuity. Our firſt ſenſation from his writings, is that of his thoughts, and nothing elſe. It is only by a reflex act, more or leſs frequent during the peruſal, that we advert to the charms of his compoſition. Strictly ſpeaking, obtruſive beauties of language are no leſs impertinent to the great ends of writing, than obtruſive defects.

THE END.

ERRATA.

P. 92, line 10, *read* voluntarily.
P. 133, line 1, *read* at the foot.
P. 171, note, *read* Chap. iv.
P. 354, line 26, *read* in to.

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